



COMMON ERRORS IN ENGLISH

Their Cause, Prevention and Cure

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CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTORY 1

This chapter discusses the learner's attitude towards English, the reasons for it, and his gratitude for good teaching. But still he makes 'mistakes'.

2. ERRORS 4

Some well-known common errors are listed in this chapter and the discussion focuses on the argument that a major cause of error is cross-association with the linguistic conventions of the learner's mother-tongue.

3. CAUSES OF ERROR 13

A wide selection of authentic errors taken from many different countries is examined and the pupil's difficulties from which they arise are traced to their source; with some comment on the toil of 'marking'.

4. PREVENTIVE MEASURES—GRAMMAR? 31

Illiterate speakers of very intricate vernaculars have no difficulty in the correct employment of the formidable grammatical conventions characteristic of their mother tongues; consideration of this fact leads up to the central thesis of this essay: the importance of linguistic 'patterns' in English construction.

5. THE ESSENTIAL PATTERNS: I—*Sentence Patterns* 44

With acknowledgements to Jespersen this chapter lists the standard sentence-patterns in English; and with acknowledgements to Palmer demonstrates their reduction to 'substitution tables'.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTORY

ENGLISH is the mother tongue of 200,000,000 people, of many races and nations. Their countries are vast in area and rich in resources, but even so commercialism has driven these people overseas so that there are communities of them, sometimes large and always influential, in every continent. No language, ancient or modern, can be compared with English in the number or geographical distribution of the homes, shops, factories and offices in which the language is spoken, written and read. Three hundred million Chinese speak dialects as mutually incomprehensible as Danish and Dutch; one hundred million Russians speak a language which is a rarity outside the borders of the Soviet Republics; Latin—to seek a parallel in the past—was acquired by many but was the mother tongue only of the few. English alone can boast of a world-wide distribution and an overwhelming numerical superiority.

For though English is vastly important as a great and powerful vernacular it is even more important as an instrument of world exchange. European and non-European peoples all over the earth are making increasing use of English as their 'second language' because, for them, English and information are inextricably interwoven; perhaps one-half of mankind have chosen English to communicate with those who do not speak their own language. The total number of persons who speak English, or are learning to speak it, or desire to speak and read it, is beyond computation.

There have been world languages in the past, when the

6 THE ESSENTIAL PATTERNS II . 61

In this chapter common errors which most frequently give trouble everywhere are grouped under headings and the analysis shows that these are in fact groups of collocations of fixed recognizable forms

7 DRILLING IN . 85

The reader is asked to agree that the best preventive of error is the drilling in of the correct standard patterns. In this chapter, the classroom processes of drilling in such patterns are demonstrated in detail with tables and exercises

8 DRILLING OUT . 98

In this chapter the converse process drilling out an error which threatens to establish itself is elaborated step by step through a typical example

9 ALTERNATIVE FORMS . 110

Teachers and pupils alike may get bored with tables. In this chapter alternative forms of exercise are suggested. Difficulties with the tenses with prepositions with the infinite forms of the verb and with idiomatic uses of single words are taken as examples

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTORY

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There have been world languages in the past, when the

world was smaller. Each owed what universality it possessed to the military power of its original speakers—Greek in the empire of Alexander, Latin in the empire of Rome, and so with the ancient dominations. When the imperial authority broke, the language broke with it, into derivative tongues to which time has added still greater diversity. But it is otherwise with English. English has behind it the thrust not of one but of several of the most influential peoples in the world, similar in political aspiration, friendly in policy, interlocked economically. Furthermore, English is not threatened with that disintegration which reduced ancient languages to families of dialects, as vulgar Latin gave birth to the Romance languages. English is unified and stabilized by the printing press, the speaking cinema, by radio and by easy air travel. If England sank beneath the sea, English would continue to spread.

The commercial weight, the technical importance and the cultural content of English both in the original and in translation from other tongues explain the world-wide acceptance of the language as the medium of intellectual exchange. A trading concern finds its business curtailed and its development hindered if its executives are ignorant of English, and the language is quite indispensable to the serious student of politics, of economics, of science, of engineering technology or of religion. No nation to-day, however great or however isolated, dares to rely altogether upon its own indigenous share of social, cultural and technical invention and development. The English language, possessing comprehensive literatures, American and British, ancient, modern, and current, and a wealth of translation far greater than those of any other language, provides the whole world with a common storehouse and a common exchange which can be utilized in every field.

A well-informed guess¹ puts the number of would-be learners of English every year at twenty millions, and this demand for instruction, great as it is, increases faster than trained teachers can be supplied to meet it. These twenty million learners have isolated this language from the other subjects in their school curriculum. They place English in the category of what they want, distinguishing it from those other subjects which are in the category of what teachers think is needful. They accept mathematics, history, geography and the rest with degrees of tolerance which vary, according to taste, from enthusiasm to dumb and pained endurance. But in the English class there is a strenuous and undefeatable desire to learn. This subject, the pupil thinks, has solid values; and the study of it leads directly to a clear and worth-while objective. And he is prepared to go to considerable lengths to ensure that his desired objective is attained. He will submit readily to a heavy allocation of time; he resents listless and inefficient tuition; he is quick to recognize successful teaching and to respond to it with enthusiasm and gratitude.

But still he makes mistakes. It was such a pupil that once wrote (in an examination paper the present author had to mark) this description of a pagan people:

'Being they are savages they do not know religion. And when we send them a Reverence to make them holy lives they killed him and devoured the flesh, having fried.'

¹ H. E. PALMER, *This Language Learning Business*.

CHAPTER TWO

ERRORS

INSTRUCTION in any subject if it so far fails to reach its simplest objective that it results in a stream of flagrant errors is a grievous waste of effort. Every teacher of English overseas realizes this and labours long and unremittingly to circumvent the 'common errors' which he knows are prompt upon the very tips of his pupils' tongues and pens. Seeking a root and general cause, he thinks he finds it in the particular construction and idiom of the regional vernacular.¹

Between any two languages whatever, there is a wide gulf of difference, differences of construction, of word order, of idiom, there are differences even so subtle that they appear wholly to defy formal definition. In acquiring the habit of linguistic expression in a foreign tongue our constant difficulty is the deep-seated linguistic habits already acquired.²

Cross associations arise simply from the fact that each idea that comes into our minds instantly suggests the native expression of it, whether the words are uttered or not and however strongly we may stamp the foreign expression on our memories, the native one will always be the stronger. This is proved by the well known fact that in moments of great excitement we invariably fall back on our native language or dialect.³

¹ F. G. FRENCH *Common Errors Due to Burmese Usage*
 BROWN and SCRAGG *Common Errors in Gold Coast English*
 WATSON HYATT *Notes on English Syntax (errors in) (for Malaya)*
² KITTSON *Language Teaching* p. 20
³ SWEET *The Practical Study of Languages* p. 198

Every writer on the teaching of languages emphasizes this point, generally in that part of his discussion which deals with the problem of translation and its evil effects in multiplying errors and preventing the use of the correct English form.

It is neither possible nor worth while to print the evidence in full, but a careful examination of lists of errors thought by those who collected them to be peculiar to their own regions, and to be directly due to cross-associations and interference of their local vernaculars, has not substantiated that assumption. The reader can form his own judgement by applying to his own experience, whatever the region in which he is interested, these examples collected from Japan, China, Burma, India, West Africa, Tanganyika, Hawaii, the Philippines and Malta. The selection was made haphazard:

By which road did you came?

I forgot to set homework yesterday, didn't I? Yes,
you didn't.

He asked me that where is the post office.

He gave me some good advices.

I did all my works.

She has black hairs.

I haven't some.

He is much tired by walking.

First I saw him he was too young.

I have been in this school since two years.

The man whom you wounded him was died.

This is the man you married his daughter.

That is the king's horse which he rides it.

Being she was a clever girl she did it for three times.

He replied me that he do not know.

I told him I do not know how old was it.

He blowed me with his fist.

He knows you, isn't it?

This fruit is not good to be eaten

He made me to know

The teacher explained me for four times

At London

Is it in the box? It is in Then give me the another one

I like to do my homework to-morrow please

I shall tell you if he will come

They gave me some fruits as oranges and mango

It is too hard that I cannot do it

My father is clerk

He took my only one book

He is a best boy in our class

I had this book last three years

I am very much thankful

I didn't laugh, only I smiled

A few number of boys are absent

They went some places

The hundreds of 'common errors' of which the above are only samples are met with in regions thousands of miles apart. The argument here presented is that if errors are due, as unmistakably as the best authorities would have us believe, to cross association, then the Japanese form of error should be one thing and the Bantu form quite another. But the plain fact is that Japanese and Bantu alike say 'Yes, I didn't', and they have scores of other errors in common. If dressing English words in vernacular patterns is indeed the root of error, then a Maltese pupil, whose language has ancient Semitic affinities, should produce mistakes markedly unlike those produced by, say, a Philippino pupil. But that is not the case. And it is to be noted that pupils everywhere have no difficulty at all in suppressing their vernacular word order in favour of English word-order. The collection of 'common errors',

of which those in the list above are only a sample, proves that the errors which exasperate teachers of English are indeed 'common'. And all the world is mystified by the English tenses. Even to the native Englishman using it colloquially, 'I have been had' looks queer in cold print.

A few errors, of course, are purely regional and do in fact arise from the cause advanced by linguistic authority. Perhaps only in West Africa 'This box is long past all' is offered for 'This is the longest box'; perhaps only in Burma and Siam are we told that 'Men cannot stay without eating'; and perhaps only in India 'Our teacher has a chair to sit'. But errors far more numerous than these and far more varied in type are found to be common all over the world, without regard to vernacular, social and domestic environment, or methods of teaching. Furthermore, and this is of the greatest importance to teachers, mistakes which are common to all regions are found everywhere to be more resistant to efforts to remove them than mistakes which are traceable to a particular vernacular. The origins of the latter are easily discovered and drills to remedy them are easily devised. The French pattern for number, 'quatre-vingt-douze', is easily suppressed by quite short practice from 'four-twenty-twelve' in favour of the English pattern 'ninety-two'; and though other cross-associations may require a little more care to diagnose and a little more drill to eradicate, they are not ineradicable—as 'common errors' seem to be, at least in the school years.

Thus in seeking the source of error in the vernacular, the teacher is searching in the wrong field. The fact that the errors are common indicates that they have a common cause. That common root is not to be found in a wide variety of languages exhibiting innumerable differences in syntax, accidence and idiom. Explanation does

not lie in cross-association and instinctive translation of the mother-tongue, but in the usages of English itself, for these usages provide the only factor which is common to all regions, all students and all methods

If the teacher can stifle his exasperation and will examine the blue-pencilled pages of his pupils' exercise books dispassionately, he will find that most of the 'common errors' are *not* the result (as he may have thought) of forgetfulness, carelessness and indolence, but have been committed in all honesty of endeavour. As we have seen, the pupil does *want* to learn English and there is less indolence in this subject than in any other. The pupil, in his own interest, will at least try to follow his instructor's exhortation to 'use his brains'. Stating what he knows to be a fact, he writes, 'My sister's hairs are black.' If some dim memory makes him hesitate between 'hair' and 'hairs', his doubts are resolved by the obvious social disadvantages of alleging that his sister has but one solitary hair on her head. Indeed, the struggle to make the English effort 'look right' is so much keener than the temptation merely to copy his mother tongue that the pupil discards his vernacular pattern even when by so doing he unwittingly commits a greater error. In English we say:

(i) The sparrow is a small bird,

but also

(ii) Sparrows are small birds

Since the statements are exactly parallel, the second one should be

(ui) The sparrows are small birds

In Burmese, for example, the patterns for these expressions are

| | | | |
|---------------|----------|--------|----------|
| Sa gale thi | nge thaw | nget | pyit thi |
| (The sparrow) | (small) | (bird) | (is) |

and in the plural

Sa gale mya thi nge thaw nget mya pyit kya thi.
(The sparrows) (small) (birds) (are)

Observe that the second, plural, form—except for word-order which the learner disposes of without difficulty—is exactly of the English form (iii) above; yet the pupil discards even this, although it contains only one mistake, and he produces instead the ‘common error’

The sparrows are the small birds,
just as the Frenchman says:

Les moineaux sont des petits oiseaux.

He sees a parallelism, not between the English form and his own idiom, but between ‘sparrows’ and ‘birds’. Discarding his vernacular in all respects, he ‘uses his brains’ and sets out what he imagines to be a safe, logical and grammatical arrangement:

the sparrows . . . the birds

One further example. Every teacher of English overseas knows the difficulty experienced with the relative possessive construction as in the sentence

I saw the man whose dog is dead.

The Frenchman, although he has the possessive relative ‘dont’, rejects it idiomatically and prefers to say

J’ai vu l’homme qui a perdu son chien.

In Maltese, the idiom is far removed from the English arrangement:

| | | | | |
|------|-------|-----------|-------|----------------|
| Jena | rajt | ir-rajel | li | mietlu |
| (I) | (saw) | (the man) | (who) | (died-for-him) |
| | | il | keeb. | |
| | | (the) | (dog) | |

In Urdu, the idiom contains a sense of the relative:

| | | | |
|------------|-----------|-------------|-------------|
| Us admi ko | jiska | kutta | margaya hai |
| (That man) | (of whom) | (dog) | (dead is) |
| | hamne | dekhe hain. | |
| (I) | (saw) | | |

In Burmese, there is no relative idea at all

Kwe the thaw lugi¹ thi chunok myin thi
(Dog died man) (the) (I) (saw)

Word order is entirely different in all five languages. The idiomatic pattern relating the four ideas

(man) (s) (dog is dead) (I saw)

is also different in all five vernaculars. If error arises from translation, or from confusion with the vernacular, pupils in Malta, India and Burma should produce three quite different types of mistake in the use of the relative pronoun. But the fact is that, as in the case of 'The sparrows are the small birds', all pupils, everywhere, discard the thought pattern of the mother tongue and arrange the English words in what appears to them to be reasonable and 'grammatical' construction, proof against the teacher's censure. Thus the 'common error' in non-European regions for a relative such as

I spoke to a man whom I had never seen before,

is

I spoke to a man who I had never seen him before
'Who' is regarded in its connective function and the reason for the appearance of 'him' is neither carelessness nor indolence, but a very prudent and praiseworthy distrust of the vacuum at the end of the transitive phrase

I had not seen (before)

When it is a question of tense, the pupil very advisedly hesitates to use a verb form which, professing to explain a given time-relation, apparently states the exact reverse of what it means, so that the vernacular does not enter into the matter at all when the pupil has doubts between

If an elephant jumps through that window to morrow,
and

If an elephant jumped through that window to morrow,
and decides to employ the straightforward statement of

the supposition that the elephant *will jump* through that window to-morrow.

Further evidence comes from those who possess English as their mother tongue. Exercises of 'Correct the following sentences' type are as popular among teachers in America and Britain as they are overseas. (In the opinion of the writer such exercises constitute a grievous error in teaching technique, at least with foreign pupils; but no matter.) If sets of those exercises could be interchanged between classes at home and abroad, neither side would find much novel in them; for American, British and foreign students have 'common errors' in common. Every teacher of English to foreign students will recognize old acquaintances in the examples following, though these are taken from American and British class books only:

They have (a, an) awning for (there, their) back porch and it looks (gaily).¹

She looked (prettily) and she sang as (good) as ever.¹

Each of the pupils (have) chosen (there, their) favourite books.¹

Do you prefer football (than) cricket?²

(Being a wet day) we wore raincoats.²

Here there is no question of vernacular interference. Native-born and foreign students fall together into the same pitfalls.

The reader may clinch the matter for himself by consulting his own list of mistakes, which every teacher of English overseas compiles at some time or other in self-defence. He will find that by far the greater number of items in it, and those the most stubborn against remedy, come under the heading 'Errors due to applying

¹ TEUSCHER (pupil's book), *Junior Language Skills*, Chicago, U.S.A.

² CLAY, *English Exercises, Ages 11-13*, London, England.

rules and analogies in the wrong places', and only a small minority under 'Errors in which only vernacular, not English, analogies apply', and fewest of all under 'Errors due to sheer laziness'. Even 'He go' is on the pattern of 'I go, to go, will go, must go', and the pupil has heard and used the form 'go' a hundred times for every once that he has heard or used the exception 'goes'.

It is neither the idiom of his mother tongue nor school-boy indolence, but stark common sense, that makes it hard for the pupil to remember that the correct answer to 'Surely nobody helped you?' is 'No', that whereas 'I saw him at the church' is correct, and 'I saw him at church' is correct also, nevertheless 'I saw him at bazaar' merits rebuke.

If English could be taught to a chimpanzee, the animal would produce all the 'common errors' and could not be blamed for snarling at its instructor when informed that the tense is wrong in 'I wish it is Sunday to-day'.

The reason why instruction in English results as often as not in a stream of errors is not to be found in cross-association with any vernacular.

CHAPTER THREE

CAUSES OF ERROR

ERRORS defy classification, for one kind merges into another as grey shades off into blue. There is, however, a grading in complexity which can be utilized to introduce some sort of order into what most teachers will agree is the most disorderly of all their problems.

The simplest error is that which the delinquent, when confronted with it, will claim as a 'slip' in a single word—with a show of reason which wards off rebuke:

The forest was quite quite.

We went together.

He married her.

I cannot fine it.

This is bigger then that.

It covered about ten acers.

The road went round in a carve.

It is worked by electric city.

So I fetched a police.

Yes, of coarse.

What is the dateth?

It was done in his absent.

The farmer gave his son some good advices and a lot of corns.

When the headmaster learn me I am glad.

What is the times?

I gave a cheap price.

This team will defeat. (=lose)

The box was upset down.

He said me a story.

He has blind eyes. (=he is blind)

I have won a price
 We shall have our School Sport in January.
 His dresses are made of silk (=clothes)
 There are no poetries in my book
 The king was kind to the poors
 I must tell my family members
 My all friends are here.
 He is becoming clever every week
 The car left at dawn but did not reach (=arrive)
 We asked him to come but he denied (=refused)
 Do not speak me lies (=tell)
 He wants some water for drinking (=to drink)
 He was fail in Mathematics
 I am very much thankful to you
 He came here before two hours (=ago)
 She was marned with him
 Write it with ink (=in)
 What is your birth date?
 My foot is painting
 I bought some paper, ink and others (=other things)
 She is good in needleworks
 He made a fun of me
 This book is belonged to me
 He was called as the School Captain.
 You must not drive a long way round but go directly
 (=direct)
 He resembles to his father
 She is not a lady, she is only a virgin (This from an
 effort in description)

Errors of this type (and they are innumerable) arise from insecure visualization, or from faulty pronunciation, or from a mistaken conception of meaning. They are errors of immaturity and for that reason, like pimples, they will disappear early and of themselves. They are not—and

let us be thankful for it—habitual. But it is not a long step from these 'slips' to more serious and persistent confusions, still centred in the single word:

Please give me the another one.

He blowed me with his fist.

It is very difficulty.

He was died last year.

We arrived the cinema.

I like to sleep now, please.

We built a roof of branches to prevent the rain.

He went to the house and I followed with him.

He got down from the upstairs.

We will begin after the breakfast.

She is aged six years old.

He has disease. (=he is ill)

I am a best boy in the class.

He is honest boy.

I did not used to learn English when I was small boy.

This is a bad news for me.

He is dwarf man.

I work hard all the times.

We got into the train and I put my bag upstairs on the rack.

He ordered me some works.

The headmistress said to punish that girl.

Your both hands are dirty.

The both boys saw it.

I prefer this book than that one.

Although he is tall but he is weak.

My father has a work to-day.

He was died by malaria.

No sooner was he ill he died.

This is too much spend. (=too expensive)

He said that no.

He succeeded to win the prize

He prevented me to go

We have come here for seeing the farm (=to see)

He tried his work as best as he could

I shall inform this to the police

Wait until I do not return (=I return)

He died at sixty years old

The meeting was attended by a large number of audience

I caught hold upon him at the left arm

The books will not contain in the box

I hope you shall be good enough and excuse me to pay the fine

This word is used both as a noun as well as a verb. Such errors cannot be claimed as 'slips', and they will not disappear of themselves, but the root cause is still the same—a failure to recall the correct word required in the context, or an inability to discriminate between words more or less alike in meaning.

After failure to recall the correct word, the next downward step is failure to recall the correct grammatical usage between words. This brings us very near to pattern-failure, and the following examples show how the one merges into the other.

(a) Trouble with structural words—omitted, inserted where not required, or wrongly used

What is the time in your watch? (*by*)

He has been absent from Monday (*since*)

This is very useful for me (*to*)

He has been ill since four days (*for*)

He is suffering malaria (*from*)

I attend my work (*to*)

We discussed about the matter (omit *about*)

They ascended up the hill (omit *up*)

He picked up a quarrel with me. (omit *up*)
 We want two more books; have you ordered? (*them*)
 There is no cure of that disease. (*for*)
 I prefer to read than to write.
 He could not come for illness. (*on account of*)
 Turn to the last but one page.
 He is regarded a fool. (*as*)
 I asked him to come but he did not agree me
 My teacher explained me for four times.
 I wanted to go but my father did not allow.
 We went to the cinema and we enjoyed.
 This is empty; please fill.
 He pretends him as a prince.
 He tell me I must do.
 My brother is young to do it. (*too*)
 He is not rich to buy his school books.
 I took short sleep.
 Show him the picture! I am showing.
 Let each of us try in their turns.
 Honey is too much sweet.
 He is not so strong like you.

(b) Confusion with structural verbs, verbals, concords and tenses:

I made him to do it.
 This is hard to be believed.
 He had left school last year.
 He has arrived at noon yesterday.
 I shall go home at once so that I tell my father.
 When I see him last I do not speak.
 He ran so fast I cannot catch.
 He has been married long ago.
 He was sorry that I cannot help him.
 Look at this. What do you call?
 Each of them have different books.

You were not present yesterday, were you? Yes,
 sir, I wasn't
 If you are not the station master, why you walk so
 proudly?

(c) Pattern failures

I could not help to lose it
 He prevented me to go
 The man ran to the station for getting help
 If he tells me I must do
 I am in this school since two years
 I am a best boy in the class
 Did he went there?
 When he saw me I am working
 When I must go, please?
 I don't know how many are there in the box
 Tell me how did he come
 Why you went?
 Please write down what is his name
 The man told me how much must I pay for it
 The money which he stole it has been found
 This is the king's horse which he rides it every day
 I spoke to the man who I don't think you know him
 Your dog bites me every day I am coming here
 The farmer will see his crops when he is going in the
 field
 Let us close the door before the bus will start
 I wish he will come early
 It will rain when the wind will blow
 Being he was ill he did not come
 Being Saturday to day, I am not in the school
 In a train disaster there you are, but in a shipwreck
 disaster where you are?

And so on. Readers can add a discouraging multitude of
 similar examples. It is the thesis of this book that teachers

everywhere are all plagued with the kinds of errors of which these are but specimens.

Simple vocabulary failure—ignorance of the word needed to express the thought exactly—is not to be classified as a common error. Ignorance is failure, but it is not a punishable offence.

In seeking remedies, it is necessary to probe right down through the mistakes themselves to fundamentals. The study we have made shows that the pupil has but an insecure control over four aspects of his material:

- (i) He is in difficulties about sentence-patterns and about ensuring that each component in a sentence is constructed in accordance with the part it has to play. The typical error here is

This is the horse *which* he rides it.

(Qualifier wrongly constructed.)

- (ii) He is shaky in the construction of phrase-patterns and collocations less than sentences. The typical error here is

It is time *for* going.

(Infinitive and gerund patterns confused.)

- (iii) He fails to discriminate correctly between the English conventions regarding tense usage, involving as they do conditions not merely of time but also of probability, condition, concession, indirect speech and all the other bugbears usually lumped together under the heading 'tense sequences'. The typical error here is

I wish it is Sunday to-day.

- (iv) He is uncertain in his realization of the grammatical requirements which arise in connexion with structural words of which *neither*, *each*, *one*, *so* are typical examples.

Let us never forget that in ninety-nine cases out of a

hundred the pupil is really trying. What, then, are the queer processes of cerebral gestation that go on in his brain to produce these oddities?

By training and desire every schoolboy is, within the limits of his erudition, a pedant. He seeks, or is given, rules and analogies. Exceptions are demonstrated, and he accepts them, but they are exceptions and they are rare. When in doubt, he relies upon a rule, or what he imagines to be a rule. It is his misfortune that

in most cases where, so to speak, the logic of facts or of the exterior world is at war with the logic of grammar, English is free from the narrow minded pedantry which in most languages sacrifices the former to the latter or makes people shy of saying or of writing things which are not strictly grammatical.

The English language is like an English park, which is laid out seemingly without any definite plan. It is opposed to any attempt to narrow in life by police regulations and strict rules either of grammar or of lexicon.¹

As Bradley² puts it, the grammar does not obtrude itself on the attention where it is not wanted, and English has thus the peculiar advantage of a noiseless grammatical machinery. The pedant likes to hear the machinery creak and to count every cog on every wheel, but English does not permit of that kind of examination although the schoolboy—aided and abetted too often by his teacher—makes the attempt. This is not to say that English has no 'grammar' as a schoolboy understands that term.

'The businesslike, virile qualities of the English language also manifest themselves in such things as

¹ JESPERSEN *Growth and Structure of the English Language*, pp. 15-16.

² *The Making of English*, p. 77.

word-order. Words in English do not play at hide-and-seek as they often do in Latin or in German. . . . In English an auxiliary verb does not stand far from its main verb, and a negative will be found in the immediate neighbourhood of the word it negatives. . . . Apart from Chinese, there is perhaps no language in the civilized world that stands so high (by this standard) as English. Look at the use of the tenses; the difference between the past *he saw* and the composite perfect *he has seen* is maintained with great consistency as compared with similarly formed tenses in Danish and German . . . the progressive tenses furnish the language with the precise and logically valuable distinction between *I write* and *I am writing*, *I wrote* and *I was writing* . . . and the distinction as made in English is made uniformly, in all verbs and in all tenses by the same device (*am*, *-ing*).¹

Unfortunately such uniformity is rare. There is a much wider field wherein the young pedant can discern no guide. There are singulars in form which are plurals in concept: *fleet*, *police*, *clergy*; and even some of those have three agreements: *the fleet is*, *the fleet are*, *the fleets are*. Words such as *hair*, *alphabet*, *ammunition*, *property* present yet another aspect of the same ambiguity; and what is the young pupil to make of *work* and *works*? It is true that the tenses are uniformly constructed but where is the guide to the exact meaning of each construction?

In sorting out this mass of puzzling rules and exceptions the schoolboy will struggle to introduce some sort of order by regulation if necessary; and even if he is not taught 'rules'—few books or teachers refrain—will make

¹ JESPERSEN, *Growth and Structure of the English Language*, p. 12.

them for himself, and when he is in doubt will attempt to apply them. Thus it comes about that the processes which give rise to error are probably after this fashion.

(i) In difficulties about vocabulary, the pupil is unable to recall, or he confuses with an approximation the word or word-group which fits his need. His failure is due either to forgetfulness or to inability to judge why the word he regards as correct, and therefore uses, is not as good as the word actually required, although it belongs to the same category.

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| (confused 'wish') | I like to go to sleep now |
| (upset/upside) | This letter is upset down |
| (very/too) | He is very weak in English to pass |
| (say/tell) | My teacher said to me one story |
| (confusion 'pour') | He filled this pot with water and he filled oil into that one |

(ii) In difficulties about sentence construction, he has sets of patterns in his mind but he is insecure in allotting patterns to duties—according to the English model. Therefore he applies such rules or analogies as he possesses, so that his units are 'correct' in themselves but incorrect in that particular setting.

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| (infinitive) | It is time for going (Pattern used This paper is for writing on) |
| (infinitive) | I am very glad that I see you again (Pattern used. I am glad that you are here) |
| (question) | I do not know where is the post office (Pattern used the question-form) |
| (comparison) | This boy is fat as a pig (Pattern used This boy is fat) |
| (transitive) | I have no book to read it (Pattern used <i>read</i> requires an object) |

- (transitive) This is the box which he moved it.
 (Pattern used: This is the box; connective; *moved* requires an object.)
- (agreement) Each of those sailors and soldiers have swords.
 (Pattern used: soldiers . . . have.)

(iii) Where his stock of patterns, rules and analogies fails, the pupil applies common sense and produces a statement of fact, especially when this solution to his doubt is strengthened by his vernacular usage:

- (fact) Yes, you didn't.
- (plural) We saw all kinds of sceneries.
- (present) ' I wish I am at home with my friends.
- (continuous and present) I am sitting here since twelve o'clock.
- (foreseeing a state of completion) As soon as/you finished your work/I will give you some food.
- (action unperformed therefore not completed) You do not yet answer my first question.
- (action completed and past, more than 'simple past') I had written this page yesterday.
- ('used'—taught as 'was accustomed') Nowadays our teacher used to give us much homework.

These processes are not evidence of carelessness or of unwillingness: rather they are evidence of growing pains and a desire to learn. Such mistakes are not punishable offences; they are accidents.

After the first two years of instruction, weeds grow apace and the proportion of teaching time which has to be devoted to endeavours to eradicate 'common errors' rapidly increases. In oral lessons—if the pupils are allowed to take any part at all (for their teacher is tempted to

curtail their halting efforts)—more energy is spent in correcting their answers than in advancing over new ground. In reading lessons, whenever the teacher diverts attention from subject matter to construction, it is because he has a misconception in mind which he must forestall and such diversions become more and more frequent. As for the composition lesson and other forms of written exercise, it is necessary, to readers to whom this book is addressed, only to offer the sympathy of a fellow sufferer in the mortifying toil and unavailing drudgery of marking written work. Even so, every teacher knows that all this unremitting effort achieves a pitifully inadequate result. The same old errors persist. A few of the brighter students shake off a fair proportion of misconceptions before they leave school, but even the best pupil of them all is liable to relapse at any moment—and for the hundredth time—into an error which he first committed years before.

Efforts at eradication which do not succeed are obviously misdirected.

The study we have made points both to reasons for failure and to remedies.

Labourious marking by the teacher, even when followed by correction by the student, fails in its object because a disgruntled, disappointed, uninterested and hasty scribbling of a correction is quite insufficient to eradicate an error which is deeply implanted, which was the result of eager and interested endeavour and which has been repeated many dozens of times in writing, in speech in and out of school, and in 'mental trial' before utterance. The forces of habit and association are not to be so easily overcome. The effect is even weaker where the teacher, justifiably disheartened by the very doubtful efficacy of recorection of recorections, enters the required word or

phrase himself, leaving the pupil merely to look at it (if he will do that much) or heedlessly copy it out. Special 'lessons' on common errors leave little impress—they are felt by the class to be a reflection, they are very uninteresting in any case, and each pupil thinks, 'Well, I am not guilty of that one, anyway; why doesn't he get on with teaching me English!'

Grammar lessons, either as a course or *ad hoc*, cannot be relied upon in the fight against error because

'Knowledge of grammar has very little effect upon correct usage. The large increases in grammatical knowledge are accompanied by only very small increases in correct usage.'¹

It is a common experience among examiners to find a candidate answering correctly a 'grammar question' in part one of the examination paper and committing the very error against which that question was aimed in part two of the same paper. Furthermore, grammar 'rules' when they are too simple are in themselves dangerous deceivers, and when they are too complex are so cumbrous as to have no corrective value, indeed they add new difficulties. This is not to say that grammar, as a part of the work in English, is useless. On the contrary, grammar—properly defined and usefully applied—can be of the greatest value. But not in the direct attack on error, after error has become habitual; for 'Habit is habit, and not to be flung out of the window by any man, but coaxed downstairs a step at a time.'²

Some teachers pin their faith upon extensive and intensive reading; finding in more and more reading the cure for all ills. There is some suspicion that these

¹ Experiment by Starch, quoted by FAUCETT, *Teaching of English in the Far East*, p. 92.

² MARK TWAIN.

advocates do not bother much about 'common errors', for their avowed objective is facility of comprehension of the printed page. If that is so, errors in self-expression are of minor importance just as errors in pronunciation are held to be. But the method meets with no greater success than others in the matter of eradicating error. Reports of experiments are often *ex parte* and restricted in field¹ and even so they rarely touch the question of eradicating errors which have already become habitual. So far as the writer has been able to discover in his own practice—and he was a 'reading' enthusiast for years, until he found the familiar crop of error as thick as ever—and in the practice of others working elsewhere, teachers who rely upon reading to remove error do not find themselves better off than their colleagues who use other methods. When they do allow their pupils to write, they have just as many errors to 'mark' as everybody else. The reason is obvious. Error arises only in connection with the active use of the language and in the manipulation of the 'active' portion of the student's vocabulary. Emphasis on reading is emphasis on the 'passive' vocabulary, and, since time and energy taken up in passive work is so much lost to active work, reading, by its very nature, lacks just that element which might protect the pupil against himself.

Errors arise because the pupil is always able to escape from a difficulty by saying or writing, not what he wants to say, but what he is able to recall. The plain fact is that when a pupil sits down to write a 'composition exercise' he is limited in his expression to the few hundred words which he retains at the threshold of his memory, available at immediate recollection, the two thousand or more which he can recognize if they are presented to him are not at the end of his pen. Therefore more or less consciously he

¹ HUSE *Psychology of Foreign Language Study* p. 149

twists and turns what he wishes to say in his own language, until he can fit it to the content of English words he has at his command.

Errors occur in 'composition', oral or written, and they are most apparent in written exercises. Errors in reading are rare. The pupil may say or write 'The sparrows are the small birds', but he does not misread 'sparrows are small birds', although his glance may pass over those printed symbols in one, or at most two, eye movements. The reason is that in reading the pupil is not called (as in speech and writing) to make an act of grammatical judgement.

Nor is bad phrasing a common fault in reading aloud by the student who has reached school-leaving standard.

It would seem that there is something in the task of composition which not merely admits, but actively encourages, error. The fact is that until the mastery of English has reached a point far beyond the reach of the ordinary school-leaver there is no such thing as 'free composition'. When a student is set to write an essay, the task resolves itself into an exercise, not in composition, but in translation. He thinks, in the vernacular, of all the things he would like to be able to say, but the job of translating them is beyond his powers.

He is a wise and kindly teacher who remembers that he can rarely know what his pupil is trying to say; he can know only what his pupil succeeds in saying.

This explains why verbal (vocabulary) errors are much less common than those arising out of faulty patterns of construction. If a pupil is consciously in doubt even about the spelling of a word, he will reject it and use another about which he feels safe. He cannot do that so easily with constructions, for sentence-forms and grammatical functions are much less tractable than words.

Among words there is a wide choice, but the pupil's stock of constructions is extremely limited and he is quickly reduced to what Sir John Adams called 'the gaping point'

In an amusing passage¹ Adams described a medical man faced (like our pupil) with a problem which is beyond his stock of knowledge to solve. There is an epidemic of influenza, and one of the doctor's patients, on the second day of illness, turns a bright pink.

The doctor, prescribing a soothing powder (which, he remarks to himself, will at least do no harm), goes off promising to return in the afternoon. He rushes home after his morning round so as to look up his books to see if he can get any information about chromatic symptoms in influenza. He gets little satisfaction from his books and less from his patient who on the afternoon visit, he finds slightly orange. Returning to his surgery he rings up a colleague telling him about his troubles and asking him to come to visit the patient along with him. The two of them are shocked at the state of the patient, who has now developed a bluish tint. The two medical men are by this time well up the inference zone but have not quite reached their limit. So they propose that a consultant should be called in and they summon a distinguished chromatic specialist. He comes along with them in the evening, only to find the patient slightly tinted green. The three doctors go into the parlour and come to a conclusion unfit for publication. They have reached the end of their inference zone. They do not know which way to turn, they do not even know what questions to ask, they have reached what the French call the end of their Latin,

¹ SIR JOHN ADAMS *Everyman's Psychology* p. 307

so they may be fairly said to have reached what I like to call the gaping point. Now when one reaches the gaping point what must one do? The answer is, gape.'

But our pupil, confronted with an examination paper or a 'composition exercise' cannot rest at the gaping point and just gape. He has to produce something. He makes a shot at it, with the only result that is possible when the stock of information is insufficient to meet the demand made upon it:

Errors will continue to flourish until both the content of classwork and the method in which it is presented ensure that the pupil possesses an active and not merely a passive (recognition) mastery, not only of words as words, but of all the four aspects of the linguistic material given to him: difficulties with sentence-patterns, difficulties with phrase-patterns, difficulties with tense and related grammatical pitfalls, and difficulties with structural words.

The most trenchant criticism which the practical teacher makes of existing class books, including some of the most recent, is that they are concerned overmuch with simple word-for-word vocabulary, and lose sight of the main difficulties which stand in the way of the learner. A class book will introduce *has* and *marry* with care and revise them at regular intervals, but it will skip too lightly round the much greater difficulty of *has married*. The text will give the pupil *did* and *I* and *so* in various places, but will offer no help at all to assist him with *so I did* and *so did I* which are poles apart.

That is the weakness of the vocabulary merchants; the goods they offer contain no preventive of common errors.

The argument of this chapter has been that interference by the vernacular language habits is not the root cause

of our troubles, nor is carelessness, nor indolence, nor vocabulary. Errors are accidents directly attributable to honest endeavour to 'get it right'. Unfortunately, the keen young manipulator of the intricacies of English too often loses some of his working formulae and substitutes his own. In the following chapter we shall consider ways and means of providing him with the assistance he needs.

CHAPTER FOUR

PREVENTIVE MEASURES—GRAMMAR?

WHEN a newly discovered language—say of some jungle tribe—has to be learned by the explorer or missionary who first makes contact with it, the most troublesome obstacle is the initial difficulty of identifying separate words. Indicating an object, or an action, by a gesture which evidently inquires the name, the explorer hears a string of syllables. It is quite impossible for him to know whether he has heard one word, or two, or three. Nearly always he finds that he has been given a collocation, a pattern, which answers his inquiry, but which contains several words. He cannot, however, identify the words separately. It is only by long and patient comparison that he can separate articles, indicating adjectives and the like from the primary words to which they are attached. The native speaker habitually uses meaningful word-groups rather than single words in their simplest form, and he expects that a group, in itself a rational unity, will be more satisfactory as an answer to an enquirer than a bare 'word'.

It has already been suggested that too much weight can be given to the importance of learning words. The common reaction, at least in the case of an adult, to the proposition that he has to learn a new language is that the primary task will be to master the new vocabulary, and he puts up lists of new words on his shaving mirror every morning. With younger pupils, the teacher is often obsessed with the piling up of nouns and verbs. Perhaps this is to be expected since in the learning of the mother-tongue there is never an end to the accumulation of new words. Vocabulary depends upon experi-

ence both direct and (through books) vicarious, the wider the experience the richer the vocabulary.

But the foreigner who may, by unremitting toil, acquire many more hundreds of words than an illiterate native speaker of a language, can never equal him in the easy mastery and unhesitating manipulation of the structural characteristics and grammatical complexities of the language. This mastery consists in an ability to use correctly, and without thought or effort, appropriate sentence-patterns and phrase-patterns. This, and not the vocabulary, is the foreigner's most difficult task.

A clear understanding of the concept of a *sentence-pattern* and of a *phrase-pattern* is vital to the present essay. A *pattern* is to the language learner what a paper pattern is to the dressmaker, the paper pattern shows the dressmaker the essential parts of the garment to be made, the shape of each, their relative positions one to another, their connexions and attachments, and the appearance of the finished article. The garment may be made in cotton, or wool, or silk, or a mixture of these, and in any colours, the dressmaker may add what decorations and embellishments she pleases, but the pattern is her guide to all the essentials. So with the language learner; the simple pattern for a straightforward plain statement in English is the three-part pattern

Cows eat grass

This standard design prescribes the plan for statements about everything in the world, as well as cows

| | | |
|---------------|--------|-----------|
| I | eat | rice. |
| I | like | that |
| Algebra | is not | difficult |
| The other man | did | it |
| Seven women | are | here |

There is a quite different pattern, also used for statements,

based on the structural word *there*, involving the inversion of the usual order of Subject and Verb:

There are seven women here.

There were sixteen tins in the parcel.

The standard pattern for commands is the simple

Go

or Go home,

but here, too, alternative patterns are available:

Please go home.

Please come back.

Please tell me.

Pray give him one.

Pray sit down.

Pray be seated.

For negative commands the pattern is *Do + not + the order*:

Do not go home yet.

Don't touch him.

For the formulation of subordinate questions, three standard patterns are available in English:

| | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------|
| | (a) if | statement |
| Reporting statement + | (b) whether | + under |
| | (c) an interrogative | enquiry. |

She asked { (a) if
(b) whether I had done it.
(c) how

Secondly, phrase patterns:

As an example, we may note the simple case of the phrase-pattern for a descriptive phrase: *This is + describer + thing described*.

This is a useful tool.

This is a horrible accident.

A striking variation of this is the inverted pattern used with *anything something* etc

anything useful
 nothing important
 somewhere secret
 somebody unknown

Other adjectival phrase patterns which the learner must have available are these

with the ing form money for travelling
 paper for writing on
 machines for harvesting

with the infinitive as describer
 bread to eat
 time to think about it
 something to put things in

and phrase patterns of the type *quantity + of + the thing talked about*

half of the money
 all of us
 most of the food in the basket

The concept of a phrase pattern is perhaps most clearly seen in time phrases such as these

in + a period

in { the evening
 { the winter
 { the daytime

during + a period

during { the morning
 { the voyage
 { the long winter evenings

at + a time

at { half past six
 { daybreak
 { the beginning of the monsoon

These examples show that a *pattern* is a standard model which prescribes the way in which, for any particular purpose, words must be grouped in accordance with the conventions of the English language. The general design and shape of the pattern are fixed, but any suitable words can be used in it. Once the student has learned the pattern, he can make for himself many thousands of sentences, or phrases, on that model, the limit being the size of his vocabulary.

But the acquirement of a large variety of correct patterns for sentence building and phrase building is not what the schoolboy understands by *grammar*. That word may cover many different kinds of material; to some it may mean declensions, conjugations, verbal mnemonics of all sorts, sets of rigmaroles. To others it may mean the examination, from a logical point of view, of the relations between words—parsing, analysis and rather abstract exercises of that kind.

It can be agreed that neither of those views of the content of 'grammar' will provide much help in the prevention of error, at least in the case of the English language; although the study of the few inflexions that remain, and of the synthesis and analysis of sentences, may suggest useful forms of exercise at an appropriate stage.

In view of the complete absence of any difficulty with patterns in the mother-tongue, even for an illiterate speaker with no knowledge of 'grammar' of any description, it is pertinent to inquire how such mastery of sentence-patterns, structural particles, and inflexions is attained, more particularly by the native speaker who has never known any schooldays. Not having been taught, does he teach himself?

A child, in picking up his own vernacular, does not merely reproduce what he hears said by grown-ups.

Through a lengthy period of listening and observation, and under the stimulation of his own desires and requirements, he first picks out, from the flow of speech around him all day long, the names of coveted or beloved objects and of pleasurable actions. But he hears these not as isolated units, not as single words held out for his inspection, but always mingled with—almost dissolved in—related word material. He hears, not words, but groups of words, each group acting as a tight unit of fixed shape and aspect. But as the child's first efforts always take the form of single words spoken alone, it is clearly less difficult for him to isolate the word than to master the group in which it occurs (That is exactly the position of the foreign learner too.) But by degrees he gets the hang of the more important groups, that is to say the sentence-patterns in most frequent use.

It is at this point that the question of grammar seems to arise, for every parent knows that the child, having grasped one or two collocations, proceeds to make his own deductions from them and applies the results in his own fashion. For example, he notes the collocations *one lollipop, two lollipops, one dolly, two dollies; sweet, sweets*, and applies it to *one man, two mans*. Combining two such deductions, he arrives at the statement that *Two mans comed*. The talk of children is full of errors in grammar of that kind.

It is to be noted that such misapplications do not occur with the actual shape of a sentence-pattern or with word-order, perhaps it is by sheer imitation, and from the fact that he never or very rarely indeed hears inversions, that the child always gets these right. He knows that whereas *Baby want rabbit* will get him what he wants, *Rabbit want baby* will not.

The parallel with the foreign student and his common

errors is clear with regard to inflexions at least. Both the foreigner and the child beginning to speak its mother tongue learn (the one by deliberate study, the other by intelligent observation of instances) certain grammatical rules, and both overlook or fail to accumulate instances of the exceptions; so that the one produces *Daddy swinned with two other mans* and the foreigner produces *many smokes and dirtis*.

The parallel breaks down in the matter of patterns. These apparently give no trouble to the child, but to the foreign student they present a hundred pitfalls. Why?

In searching for an explanation we may note, in the first place, that the child does not read or write; he confines himself to listening and to speech. Much of what he hears is disregarded; he selects for his speech purposes only what he needs and that in its simplest forms and patterns.

The foreign student, on the other hand, is introduced to reading at a very early stage; and nothing of what he reads can be disregarded, indeed it forces itself upon his attention. He has no choice and no protection—a multiplicity of sentence-patterns and phrase-patterns, often very difficult to distinguish, are forced upon him at a very early stage. Compare the reading material normally put before a foreign student in, say, his second and third year of the study of English, with the simple constructions used by a child in its second or third year of speaking its mother tongue.

We may note in passing that this comparative freedom from trouble with sentence-patterns holds true of the child who is learning two languages at once in the years of early childhood; in neither language does the child read; he learns both languages by listening, by selective imitation and by speech.

This chapter is entitled 'Preventive Measures'. The first preventive measure should prevent the learner from seeing too many varieties of construction patterns at too early a stage. The child picking up his own vernacular learns a few simple sentence patterns selected for him by his own needs. He hears others, but he disregards them and they are not forced upon his attention because, at first, he does not read or write. The foreign learner needs similar protection. As he must begin to read at an early stage, his reading must be so controlled that he is not confused by the sentence patterns which are strange to him because he has not yet learned to use them in speech.

A second preventive is indicated by the mistakes made by the child *mans* for *men* and *comed* for *came*. These arise because the child, after his own fashion, teaches himself 'grammar' by the inductive method so that the preponderance of regular forms swamps the exceptions. But this phase is temporary only and is quickly over; and the solecisms that persist, even into adult life, are not (generally speaking) traceable to misapplications of known rules. *We could of gone* *Who dunni?* *Leave me drive the car* *Seeing as how you aren't well*. These are sports and aberrations, they are not 'mistakes'.

To teach 'schoolboy grammar' does not prevent error; it may even cause it if it is taught at the wrong time in the wrong way. Taught in the right way and at the appropriate stage in the course, formal grammar can be very helpful. But it must be the real grammar of modern English and not the purblind old cripple of 'classical' grammar which still appears in too many class books. This brings us to the point of this chapter.

The key to the prevention of error lies in a restatement of the grammar of modern English in a form in which it

can be applied in practical fashion to the teaching of the language as a foreign tongue. What is the content of the grammar of modern English? The grammatical materials of any language are the devices of word-change and of word-arrangement which are necessary in order to express meaning over and above the content-meaning of the separate words.

In English, these devices are three in number: word-order, the use of structural particles (pronouns, prepositions, relatives and the like), and a very few living inflexions.

Word-order lies at the base of all sentence-frames in English. *The farmer leads the goat*—a simple example of the three-part pattern which depends on word-order, runs true to type through many variations which may mount up to such a sentence as

The speech made by the Prime Minister on Thursday last succeeded in misleading completely all those of his followers who have failed to read the signs of the times.

Here the three parts of the pattern are still clearly distinguishable and word-order is still the determinant.

Structural particles are so common and are so important a characteristic of sentence structure that they need no emphasis here. In 100 consecutive sentences of ordinary English there may be as many as 300 prepositions, 200 pronouns and 100 other structural words, a total of 600 structural particles for 100 finite verbs.

Two points, however, may be underlined. First, it is characteristic of structural particles that most of them bear a multitude of meanings, and more meanings are added from year to year. The *Oxford English Dictionary* sets out 63 applications of the word *of*, 40 of *with*, and almost as many of such functional words as *make*, *get*, *be*

and *have*. Quite recently a new slant to the verb *to take* and to the preposition *off* has been given in their application to the process of an aeroplane *taking off*.

And, secondly, structural words show an amazing adaptability in the formation of units of language which are not what Palmer called monologs (single words conveying two or more ideas) but which act as such

good evening (=the monolog *bonsoir*)

to go out (=the monolog *auszugehen*)

take care of, in the case of, to get on with, to go in for

The meaning of such units is not the sum of the root meanings of the words of which they are built, but resides in the framework in which they are embedded. *To get on with* is as useful and as idiomatic and as resistant to analysis as *notwithstanding*. So also the phrase *in a quarter of an hour* is not a string of six words but a linguistic unit which can form its own genitive *in a quarter of an hour's time* and, as such, hangs together just as firmly as *fortnight* or *weekend*. It is the plan of the group and not the particular words in it which is permanent and persisting

in a quarter of an hour ('s time)

in about a week ('s time)

in less than three months (' time)

The same persistence of a fixed pattern which admits a variety of component words is seen in

a long way from I think so

not very far from *and in* some people say so

six yards from I'm afraid so

The fundamental point is that the pattern is built upon a structural particle which *stays put*, although the other components may vary. To attempt to break up such units into separate words is to murder the sense.

Whatever the true unit of speech may be, our leading semanticists and speech psychologists are

all agreed that this unit is rarely the word, but generally the word-group or sentence. . . . These units of speech may be short and simple such as *yes, no, there*, or they may be groups such as *Very well, I don't know, Yes, I can.*¹

The division of language into words is often a typographical accident; it is certainly a cause of confusion and a prolific source of error when it is allowed to obscure the vital importance and the commanding permanence of the fixed patterns into which words and word-groups are fitted by the conventions of the language.

A thorough drilling in these patterns will be the most powerful preventive of error.

Inflexions, the third grammatical device used in English, rank very low. Hundreds of them have died long since and of the survivors some are weaklings and others are already *in extremis* (Who are you talking to?). Modern English has only five inflexions: for the plural and the genitive, in the spoken language one inflexion serves for both of these—*boys, boys', boy's*; for the third person singular of the Present Tense—and the same inflexion serves for this also—*boys, goes*; for the five principal parts of verbs; and for degrees in adjectives and adverbs. These, so few in number and so easily drilled, need cause little trouble. Difficulties and errors arise, not from uncertainty about an inflexion pure and simple, but from the use of inflexions in word-groups. Perhaps we may admit one exception to that statement: the inflexion for the plural consistently gives rise to errors due to confusion between countable and uncountable nouns:

He bought many furnitures.

The fire made lots of dirt and smokes.

He has not yet finished all his works.

¹ PALMER, *Principles of Language Study*.

Clearly, this use is a convention which cannot be learned by definition or by rule and must be dealt with by examples. But that brings us back to fixed patterns and to structural words, for the examples will best be drilled in collocations with the appropriate quantitatives

| | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------|--------------------------|---|--------|
| <i>much</i> | furniture | <i>many</i> | { | chairs |
| <i>a great deal of</i> | work | <i>a large number of</i> | | cows |
| <i>a little</i> | smoke | <i>a few</i> | | houses |
| <i>a large amount of</i> | dust | <i>a good many more</i> | | |
| <i>much more</i> | sugar | | | |
| | kindness | | | |

This, then, is the content of the grammar of modern English useful for our purposes: word-order, structural words and a few inflexions, and all of these are best presented and taught in the sentence-patterns which embody the conventions of English usage.

To sum it up, it appears that the student flounders into common errors because he strives—and strives hard—to apply rules which are largely of his own compiling, and he uses common sense where the illogical conventions and thought-habits characteristic of English are, in fact, the only criteria of what is correct. Increase of vocabulary is no cure. Formal grammar lessons, whether they be descriptive, historical or comparative in content, will merely provide further 'rules' to be misapplied. But analytic grammar, which exposes the bones of structure, may be of value at a late stage.

It is suggested that the prevention of error lies in concentrating attention, from the earliest stages and throughout, on the fixed designs and ground-plans to which word-groups must conform in order to make sentences and phrases which are 'correct' according to English usage, and on the important part played by

structural words of all kinds in the construction of those conventional patterns.

This will be the grammar, as it is also the composition and the vocabulary, which the student will practise until it is second nature to him.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE ESSENTIAL PATTERNS I

Sentence Patterns

WE HAVE arrived at the point at which it is necessary to support our general thesis by presenting lists of the actual patterns, the fixed prototypes to which English sentences conform. It will be useful to associate groups of patterns with the sources of error set out in Chapter Three. These were uncertainties connected with

- 1 Sentence prototypes
- 2 Phrase patterns
- 3 Patterns of tense usage and related grammatical conventions
- 4 Patterns based on the idiomatic use of structural words

It is not claimed that every mistake must fall under one of these four heads. Simple vocabulary failure has already been excepted. But it is urged strongly that if the learner is practised in each of them, the teacher's troubles will be greatly reduced. This and the following chapters, therefore, will be devoted to the examination of the patterns which fall into each of the four classes named.

First, sentence patterns

An English sentence need not, necessarily, contain either a Subject or a Predicate. A communication must make sense: its essential quality is its communicableness, nothing more is required of it. *Ticket* uttered alone is not a sentence, because it is impossible to make out what the speaker is trying to communicate, but *What ticket?* is a sensible enquiry demanding an answer, and is therefore a sentence. Colloquial language uses non-verbal

sentences of that kind with considerable freedom:

Why me?

No wonder.

A good thing too.

Another glass of beer, please.

Not that way.

Here?

Better late than never.

But these are departures from the normal. The sentences with which we are more usually concerned contain the first and may contain one or more of the four following components in this list of five: a verb in one of its finite forms, a subject, a direct object, an indirect object, and a predicative or complement.

These five components arrange themselves in different ways according to the logical (and sometimes emotional) requirements of the communication they have to make—a statement, a question, a dependent question, a rough order, a polite request, an exclamation (*What a man you are!*), an answer (*Oh no, I don't think so*), a contrast, or a comparison.

There is here a wide scope for the multiplication of patterns, but, as we know, the fundamentals are really few in number, the remainder being sports and variations, just as *What a man you are!* (Predicative, Subject, Verb) is a variation of *You are a funny man* (Subject, Verb, Predicative).

'Any sentence-pattern is a specified arrangement of the parts of a sentence; we cannot discuss patterns, therefore, without continual reference to the parts of a sentence.'¹

Jespersen has invented and elaborated a complete system of symbols for this purpose which, like algebraic symbols

¹ *Analytic Syntax*, OTTO JESPERSEN. Copenhagen, 1937.

in a mathematical discussion, replace long verbal descriptions by a code of letters. For our immediate purpose his code can be simplified and reduced to this short list, which will be found well worth the trouble of memorizing

Capitals

S = Subject of the sentence

V = the main Verb

O = Object of the Verb, or Object of a preposition

O_i = Indirect Object

O_d = Direct Object

P = Predicative or Complement as in *It is true*

Small Letters

v = Structural Verb as *can do* = v + V

n = Negative as *can not* = v + n

s = Substitute Subject as *It is I* = s + V + S

x? = an interrogative as *What is that?* = x? + V + S

With this code of symbols the nine basic sentence patterns in English are

| | | |
|------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| <i>Imperative</i> | Go | V |
| | Take this | V-O |
| <i>Intransitive</i> | He laughed | S-V |
| <i>Transitive</i> | John bought a book | S-V-O |
| <i>Predicative</i> | It came true | S-V P |
| <i>Double Object</i> | I gave her a hat | S-V-O _i O _d |
| | They offered a reward to the accused | S-V-O _d -O _i |
| <i>Secondary Predicative</i> | They made me laugh | S-V-O-P |
| <i>Substituted Subject</i> | There are seven | s-V-S |
| | It is good to be here | s-V-S |

So much for statements. The outstanding characteristic of these patterns is the tenacity with which English holds to the Subject first Verb afterwards order. All

teachers will agree that this fundamental of the language gives, in practice, little trouble even with pupils whose own mother-tongue is highly inflected and therefore much less dependent upon word-order than English is. But if such pupils do find any difficulty it is easily removed by drill in the basic patterns listed above.

Question forms fall into two groups: *fixed* questions which require a plain *Yes* or *No* containing, as they do, the material required for their own answers; and *free* questions which demand information and do not provide the material for the reply. For these two groups the basic patterns are:

A. *Fixed Questions*:

(a) Single word verbs:

| | |
|--------------------|--------|
| Has he any cattle? | V-S-O? |
| Is he alive? | V-S-P? |

(b) With structural verbs (v):

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------|
| Can you hear? | v-S-V? |
| Did he eat it? | v-S-V-O? |
| Must I give him something? | v-S-V-Oi-Od? |

(c) *Tag* questions (n=negative):

| | |
|---|--------------------------|
| He will come, won't he? | S-v + V:-v + n-S? |
| He won't come, will he? | S-v + n-V:-v-S? |
| He ate it, didn't he? | S-V-O:-v + n-S? |
| He didn't give you anything, did he? | S-v + n-V-Oi-Od: v-S? |

B. *Free Questions*, where x? may be an interrogative pronoun or an interrogative adverb:

(a) Interrogative pronouns:

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------|
| Who comes? | x?-V? |
| Who ate it? | x?-V-O? |
| What will he eat? | x?-v-S-V? |
| What will he give me? | x?-v-S-V-Oi? |
| To whom will he give it? | x?-v-S-V-Od? |

(b) Interrogative adverbs

| | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Where is it? | x?-V-S? |
| How did you go? | x?-v-S-V? |
| When will he buy one? | x?-v-S-V-O? |
| Why did they give you the money? | x?-v-S-V-O ₁ -Od? |
| How did it come true? | x?-v-S-V-P? |

It will be noticed again in these question patterns how tenacious English is of the S-V-O order, the simple question is characterized by the inversion V-S, but this does not hold true in the great majority of question forms except in so far as the small structural verb precedes the Subject, leaving the content-verb in its normal place

Can you hear? v-S-V?

We have listed ten models for statements and nineteen models for questions. It can be agreed that these do not, in practice, give much trouble in our class-rooms. They are not in themselves and in their simplest forms difficult to learn. The only argument which is pressed here is that these basic patterns will be of most value if they are given to the learner designedly as models to be memorized and made habits of thought. For this purpose Palmer¹ has developed the *Substitution Table*, which takes a sentence-pattern and sets it out on a ruled framework to display its component parts

| | | |
|------------|----|---------|
| My brother | is | writing |
|------------|----|---------|

¹ PALMER, *One Hundred Substitution Tables* Heffer, Cambridge

Each section or 'box' in turn can be treated as a variable:

I. The Subject treated as the variable:

| | | |
|--|----|---------|
| My brother The prince One of them She None of us The head clerk The boy in the back row | is | writing |
|--|----|---------|

II. The Structural Verb (tense) as the variable:

| | | |
|------------|---|---------|
| My brother | is was will be has been had been can't have been | writing |
|------------|---|---------|

III. The Main Verb as the variable:

| | | |
|------------|----|---|
| My brother | is | writing working sitting down watching us coming very soon trying to read |
|------------|----|---|

Adding all the variations (which must be carefully chosen so that every combination makes a rational communication) we get from this Substitution Table, i.e. from the original sentence-pattern, $4 \times 5 \times 4 = 80$ different sentences

| | | |
|-------------|----------|--------------|
| My brother | is | writing |
| The prince | was | working |
| One of them | will be | sitting down |
| She | wasn't | watching us |
| | has been | |

Thus the simple S-V-O pattern from page 46 can be drilled

| | | | |
|---|--|--------|--------|
| I | John The other man Neither of us My brother and I <i>etc</i> | bought | a book |
|---|--|--------|--------|

| | | | |
|----|----------------------------|--|--------|
| II | John They <i>etc</i> | bought made is/are making has/have seen <i>etc</i> | a book |
|----|----------------------------|--|--------|

| | | | |
|-----|--------------------|----------------------|--|
| III | John <i>etc</i> | bought <i>etc</i> | a book the other one seventeen of them a few nails a little rice <i>etc</i> |
|-----|--------------------|----------------------|--|

and so for any of the patterns

The forms of question and statement listed on pages 46 and 47 make language as warp and woof make cloth. The most ornate prose is but repetition, combination, variation and ornamentation of these standard designs. Combinations and variations come easily and readily in the colloquial speech of one whose mother tongue is English:

That man I simply detest. O-S-V

How well you are looking! P-S-V

You will soon be ready, I hope? O-S-V?

But we are not concerned here with the freedom permitted to a native speaker; our business is to smooth the path of the foreign learner and remove those difficulties which puzzle him when struggling with the class composition or an examination paper. The number of combinations and manipulations which he requires is limited to a reasonable figure and they can be practised as the need arises. For example, the simple S-V form provides a neat starting-point for drilling the passive use of verbs because (a matter often overlooked) the passive is far more frequently used in the S-V form without mention of the agent, than with it:

| | | | |
|----|--------------------------------------|----|---|
| He | laughed died went away etc. | He | was beaten was killed in the war was badly wounded in the was sent for [left arm was taken away etc. |
|----|--------------------------------------|----|---|

It is not wise, therefore, to require the class to learn the passive use by converting *John hit Henry* into *Henry was*

but by John because the result is stilted in form, unnatural and very rarely used

Similarly, when an indirect object is used, as for example in *He gave the boy a prize*, it should be made the Subject in the passive form

The boy was given a prize

which is an obvious parallel to

The boy received a prize

The simple S-V-O pattern will provide drills for special cases which are often the source of trouble, such as

| | | |
|-----------|----------|---|
| The thing | weighed | forty tons <i>etc</i> |
| | cost | five shillings <i>etc</i> |
| | measured | two feet by three feet <i>etc.</i> |
| | rose | several feet above the house-top <i>etc</i> |

and

| | | | |
|-----------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| The thing | cost brought | my father me him them | five shillings more than that a lot more than £10 |
| | stopped started kept | | working <i>etc</i> |

The reflexive use arises naturally from the S-V-O pattern:

| | | |
|----------|--------|-------------------------------|
| (a) He | cut | (a) himself |
| (b) She | taught | (b) herself |
| (c) They | washed | (c) themselves one another |

The *fixed* question form provides an opportunity for drilling particular kinds of answers as colloquial elaborations of the plain 'Yes' or 'No':

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Will he come? | Oh no! Of course not I hope so I think so Oh yes, I think so |
|---------------|--|

It shows also the use of the question, without a question mark, as a polite request:

Will you take this chair, please.

So far we have dealt with a sentence containing only one finite verb. In the next chapter we shall examine those minor patterns which do not contain any finite verb.

This seems to be the point at which to deal with the models which include subordinate clauses as major components of the pattern itself:

I believe that he is ill
 S - V - O
└──────────┘
S-V-P

- (a) The inserted clause may be a *primary*,¹ that is to say the Subject, the Object, or the regimen of a preposition

I believe *(that) he is ill*

That is *what I call a good answer*

The worst part is *that he lied to me*

You may marry *whom you like*

You may give it *to whom you please*

He will take *what you give him*

I wish *I had some money* ('Past of Imagination')

Specimen tables

| | | | | |
|---|---|------------|--------|---------------|
| I | I | believe | (that) | he is ill |
| | | think | | you are wrong |
| | | know | | this is one |
| | | understand | | that is mine |

¹ *Explanatory Note* — In his study of functional grammar, Jespersen identifies three *ranks* in words or word groups as units. A Primary is a word or a group acting as a unit, which is grammatically and logically of the first importance:

terribly cold weather

If either is the Primary because it is the essential in the group

A Secondary defines or in some other way determines or assists a Primary

terribly cold weather

Cold is the Secondary because it defines the Primary *weather*

A Tertiary defines or in some other way determines or assists a Secondary

terribly cold weather

Terribly is the Tertiary because it modifies the Secondary *cold*

II

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| I wish Don't you wish | I had some money to-day was Sunday you were right I knew the answer we were there |
|--------------------------|---|

The clause as dependent question:

III

| | |
|---|--|
| I know I don't know I wish I knew I can't imagine He refused to tell me | why he did it where he went how many he had when it happened which one he wanted |
| | who did it what caused it who was there |

(b) The inserted clause may be a *secondary* (i.e. a qualifier to a primary):

S - V - O - OQ (secondary)

He read the report I gave him.

I know the town/where you were born.

I dislike the way/in which you hold your pen.

This is the man/whose dog is dead.

I spoke to the woman/I met there.

This is the one/you are looking for.

I have found the key/you lost.

Any money you find/you may keep.

Specimen tables

| | | | |
|-----|--|-------------------|--|
| I | I know the place We saw the house <i>etc</i> | where in which | you were born the man died he cooked his food <i>etc</i> |
| II | I spoke to the man Is this the person You must give this to the man <i>etc</i> | who | had a broken arm bought the car <i>etc</i> |
| | | whom | you saw you like <i>etc</i> |
| | | whose | dog is dead arm is broken <i>etc</i> |
| III | This is the one <i>etc</i> | (that) | you were looking for he was looking at I am taking care of we disagree with <i>etc</i> |

- (c) The inserted clause may be a *tertiary* (i.e. a qualifier to a secondary)

We walked where the ground was driest

We will do it after I come back

(and similar tense sequence pitfalls)

She fainted as soon as she saw him

We will try again as soon as he gets back.

(and similar time adverbials)

Will you come if it rains?

(and similar clauses of condition, cause, concession, manner and degree).

Specimen tables:

| | | | | |
|---|-----|-----------------|------------|-------------|
| I | She | opened the door | before | I came back |
| | | bought the car | after | the thief |
| | | fainted | | arrived |
| | | etc. | as soon as | I spoke |
| | | | | etc. |

| | | | | |
|----|------------------|----------------|------------|------------|
| II | We They He | will try again | as soon as | he returns |
| | | will do it | when | it stops |
| | | will tell us | if | it rains |
| | | etc. | | etc. |

But the drilling of tables does not take us all the way, for the pupil is still left with the task of utilizing, for his own particular needs, in private and without our help, the tables we have taught him.

When a pupil has grasped one of the standard patterns in that way, what goes on in his head when he attempts to use the pattern in an original effort?

When he sets about composing an English sentence, a pupil's first step is not an act of verbal manipulation; it is an act of logical thought. If words (as distinct from visual or other mental images) are used at all, they are

words in his own vernacular, not English words. It is a long time before the student has such a ready and wide command of an active vocabulary that he can think straightaway and solely in English. He begins, therefore, by imagining the concepts he will require for such of the sentence components (S, V, O, P) as he proposes to use, and he can produce from stock the pattern appropriate to each separate concept. His difficulty lies in finding the pattern which is a composite of the separate items.

According to circumstance he finds that the expression of the concept he has in mind requires a word (John bought *one*) or a phrase pattern (John bought *neither of them*) or a sentence

(John bought *what the man showed him*)

If it is the last, two sentence patterns have to be fitted together

But it is rare that a sentence containing only the plain major components S, V, O and P will meet requirements. Each component may, and generally does, have a qualifier. This adds tremendously to the pupil's difficulties, for these qualifiers can themselves be words or phrases or sentences. Faced with such complications, the student will separate one concept from another, reduce each to its simplest terms, and express them disjointedly.

John bought one

He was the only boy who had some money

He bought the one which the man showed him

He bought it as soon as he could

When, marking the exercises, we meet with that, we put a red ink bracket round the group and exhort the writer, *Join your sentences together*. The exhortation is futile. The writer would have expressed all the concepts together had he known how. He could have done so had he been prepared with such tables as this

| | | |
|------|---|------------|
| John | who had some money in his pocket who had a little money who wanted a new pen who was looking at them in the shop window who . . . <i>etc.</i> | bought one |
|------|---|------------|

It used to be—perhaps in some quarters it still is—the practice to encourage this preliminary isolation of ideas by setting the task:

Join these sentences:

The man hit me. He had a white coat.

The response demanded is:

The man with a white coat hit me.

But that is an exercise in elaboration of a standard sentence pattern by adding a qualifier to the Subject in the form of a prepositional phrase. The prepositional phrase is itself a standard pattern and can be drilled as such, *in situ*:

| | | |
|---------|---|--------|
| The man | with a white coat with a mark on his nose with the little child with one leg | hit me |
|---------|---|--------|

That is a far more valuable exercise than the 'combination of sentences'. Combination is indeed the very essence of the pupil's trouble. He tries to add his words

together one upon one like pearls on a string but that is not the nature of language Words are fitted together in patterns of recognizable design, and it is these moulds, not individual words, which meet the pupil's need in expressing his concepts The designs are evident in such groups as

| | | |
|------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| where to go | two days ago | and so can I |
| what to do | a few months ago | and so did he |
| which one to get | a long time ago | and so will we |
| how to start | years ago | and so must you |

Having grasped the fundamental patterns of the English sentence the learner has to make a collection also of the components of the sentence pattern itself, as S or O or P, and sometimes to qualify those components The next step therefore, is to list these essential tools

CHAPTER SIX

THE ESSENTIAL PATTERNS: II

THE WORD *essential* is introduced into the title of this chapter because, of the very large number of patterns into which word groups can be formed (Thorndike in a pioneer study listed 438¹), it is necessary for our purposes to discuss only those which occur most frequently in common use. We will draw upon our experience, therefore, to compile a list of constructions which consistently, and everywhere, give trouble. It is not intended to be complete, and teachers, to whom this essay is addressed, will be able to add to it, out of their own painful experience.

Common errors defy classification largely because any one can be placed under at least two heads: *I do not know what are you looking* combines the faults of a twisted dependent question and a missing preposition. For this reason the grouping adopted here has no other defence than convenience. It cannot be exhaustive; it is intended to be persuasive, tempting the teacher to compile his own groupings and tables. Under each head, after a word of explanation, a few errors typical of the group are given as a reminder and these are followed by a specimen substitution table which, it is suggested, may be adapted to deal with most of the errors in the group and used as a prophylactic against them.

1. *Tense confusions*

Verb changes used in English to indicate time relations

¹ 'An Inventory of English Constructions', E. L. THORNDIKE AND OTHERS. *Teachers' College Record*, Columbia University, February, 1927.

are employed also for many other purposes and this usage often runs contrary to common sense—*I wish it was Sunday to-day*. To make matters worse, the same time relation is expressed in different ways involving word forms which belong ostensibly to other 'times'. The Simple Present, here and now, appears as

I live here now

I am living here now

He does not live here

He is offended (Past Participle)

He is shaving

He is being shaved (Two participles)

A good dog will wait for his master for hours

You may be clever but you can't do this one

The train will be in by now

If I were you I should go now

If he had the money I'm sure he would give it to you now

(and reporting the past)

Well, says he if it rains to-morrow the train is sure to be late

Possibilities such as these, added to the conventions of indirect speech the perfect tenses, and the 'past of imagination' confront the learner with a host of difficulties

(a) *The sequence of tenses in adverbials of time*

We have all met

I shall see him before the train will go

We must wait here until he will return

I shall take my umbrella in case it will rain

The troops will return immediately peace will be made

She will go on reading until the lights will go out

The drill required is a model in which the unexpected present tense is sharply emphasized

| | | |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| They will do it | before after until in case | the engine stops |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|------------------|

(b) *Tense to indicate a condition:*

Common sense leads to:

If I shall fail in the examination my father will be angry.

Suppose I will pass, he will not be angry then.

You had better take an umbrella if it will rain.

Three kinds of condition are to be considered—a likely condition, an unlikely condition, and a supposition about the past which did not, in fact, occur. For these three purposes three tables are necessary, each one stressing, first, the time factor by using an adverbial and, secondly, the 'resultant' by repetition:

| | | |
|----------|------------------------------------|--|
| If | he goes to school to-day | will he see his mother? Yes, he will see her. |
| Provided | he went to the palace to-day | would he see his mother? No, he wouldn't see her. |
| Suppose | he had gone to school yesterday | would he have seen his mother? Yes, he would have seen her. |

(c) *Pupils sometimes jumble their tenses*

We talked and making plans

However hard he tried he cannot do it

Go where you are seeing the road

He went on working as long as he was seeing

It is impossible to make any general provision against such mistakes as these, for they are innumerable, but on appropriate occasions, and to illustrate the enormity of the crime, suitable tables can be used for drill

| | |
|----|--|
| We | talked and made our plans talked, argued and quarrelled ate, drank and slept ran, jumped and skipped wrote and |
|----|--|

| | | |
|---------|---|--------------------------------|
| However | hard I try long I work many I do | I cannot find the answer |
| | | I shall not find the answer |
| | hard I tried long I worked many I did | I could not find the answer |

2 *Dependent questions*

These are old acquaintances and comment is unnecessary. The difficulty resides perhaps in the introductory (main) clause for the wording is an open temptation to use the direct question form in what follows

I want to know . . .

He is asking why . . .

Moreover, the complications of indirect speech are also introduced by the main clause—

I am asking you . . .

I asked you . . .

Tables for dealing with dependent question difficulties will isolate the main clause and emphasize the structure of the dependent question:

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>I am asking you I want to know Do you know This letter tells us</p> | <p>where it is how many there are when he will come what he has done</p> |
| <p>I asked you I wanted to know Did he know The letter told us</p> | <p>where it was how many there were when he would come what he had done</p> |

It is worth while pointing out to the puzzled student that *whether* makes no difficulty, and neither does the interrogative when it asks for the Subject:

I want to know whether *he did it*. *S-V-O*

I want to know *who did it*. *S-V-O*

The errors connected with dependent questions are so numerous and common that they have been chosen as the type to demonstrate drill in detail in Chapter Eight.

3. *Sequence of tenses* in indirect speech is not really so difficult to dispose of as many teachers think. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the reporting verb is in the past tense: *He said . . .* The error commonly resides

there *He said me . .* *He explained me . .*

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>He said He told me He explained to me that</p> | <p>he wrote it he was writing it he had written it he might write it he could write it</p> |
|---|--|

4 *Prepositions*

These are by far the most important and the most frequently used of all structural words, and prepositional phrases provide more phrase-patterns than any other kind of collocation. Prepositions are omitted, misapplied, and wrongly inserted in every conceivable way

There is nothing to be afraid

Who is the girl he is in love?

I am working here since seven days

She explained me for four times

He earned money with carrying parcels.

The prepositional patterns are dealt with in detail in the next chapter where they are taken as the typical example in the construction and drilling of phrase-patterns. It is sufficient here to give only one model table—that for the 'final' preposition:

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| <p>This is the girl</p> | <p>I am in love with I agree with I explained it to you must take care of we were looking for they are talking about</p> |
|-------------------------|--|

5. *Infinitive patterns*

Next in importance numerically to prepositional phrases are the collocations based on the Infinitive, either with or without *to*. Numerous errors arise here because the bare infinitive *run* is so easily mistaken for a full verb, and treated as such:

I saw him ran.

We heard the girls sang (or were singing) a song.

He wishes that you to sing.

We are lucky to found it so quickly.

(a) *The infinitive as predicative* needs careful drill in which the Objective must be stressed so as to eliminate the idea that there is a Subject to which a Verb is attached: for this reason, in the table, the Verb is preceded by an *objective* pronoun:

I saw him run.

S - V - O - P

| | |
|--------|---|
| - | him run the girls jump her show him the picture him make the horse drink him make her kneel me let it drop us walk away |
| He saw | |

(b) *The infinitive in collocations without to:*

| | | |
|----|--|--|
| He | may can will must dare not | give me one tell you that story explain it to you repeat it to the police |
|----|--|--|

(c) *The infinitive in collocations with to*

| | | | |
|------|---|--|---------------------------------|
| I | want wish long hope desire agree | refused forgot meant promised pretended tried | to see him again to go there |
| I am | glad anxious pleased afraid unable | to do it once more to answer the question | |

(d) *The infinitive as a secondary**and as a tertiary (often of purpose)*

| | | | |
|----------------|---|------------|---|
| some- thing | to encourage you to amuse you to be amused at to wear to talk about to look at to be studied carefully | He came | to see the doctor to make a report to explain it to us to please you to borrow a book to do his work |
|----------------|---|------------|---|

Not forgetting the Passive form in all these cases; also the very useful type

| | | |
|-----|-------------------------------|---|
| too | old young weak proud | to do it to go there to answer questions to care |
|-----|-------------------------------|---|

(e) *The infinitive with a relative:*

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| <p>I know He told us</p> | <p>who(m) to ask which one to buy where to go how to get rid of it what to do how much to give him how many books to buy when to blow the whistle what is to be done</p> |
|------------------------------|--|

(f) *The infinitive as a measure of degree:*

This, in the writer's experience, leads to some queer errors. I have never been able to understand an expression quite common among pupils in some parts of the East:

I am very lazy to stay at home
meaning (at least it so appeared from the context and circumstances) 'I felt very disinclined to work so I stayed at home'.

A more general error is:

I am too tired that I cannot walk.

The remedy lies in drilling *too* and *to* as close together as possible:

| | | |
|----------------------|--|--|
| <p>This horse is</p> | <p>too weak too tired too thin too small</p> | <p>to work any more to please me to stand up to pull that cart</p> |
|----------------------|--|--|

(c) *The infinitive in collocations with to*

| | | | |
|------|---|--|---------------------------------|
| I | want wish long hope desire agree | refused forgot meant promised pretended tried | to see him again to go there |
| I am | glad anxious pleased afraid unable | to do it once more to answer the question | |

(d) *The infinitive as a secondary**and as a tertiary
(often of purpose)*

| | | | |
|----------------|---|------------|---|
| some- thing | to encourage you to amuse you to be amused at to wear to talk about to look at to be studied carefully | He came | to see the doctor to make a report to explain it to us to please you to borrow a book to do his work |
|----------------|---|------------|---|

Not forgetting the Passive form in all these cases, also the very useful type

| | | |
|-----|-------------------------------|---|
| too | old young weak proud | to do it to go there to answer questions to care |
|-----|-------------------------------|---|

(e) *The infinitive with a relative:*

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| <p>I know He told us</p> | <p>who(m) to ask which one to buy where to go how to get rid of it what to do how much to give him how many books to buy when to blow the whistle what is to be done</p> |
|------------------------------|--|

(f) *The infinitive as a measure of degree:*

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| | | |
|----------------------|--|--|
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|----------------------|--|--|

6 The *-ing* forms include the present (active) participle and the gerund, but this distinction is of little practical help to the pupil struggling to remember constructions such as

The garden wants weeding

He spent £3 on labour for weeding the garden

I prefer sowing to weeding

Weeding being impossible, the farmer went home

We saw him weeding his garden

The women crossed the field, weeding as they went

He is not bothered overmuch whether those *-ing* forms are participles or gerunds, his need is to know how to employ them correctly

For our present purpose, therefore, collocations based on the *-ing* form will be classified according to employment and the nature of the pattern in which they are found. A few examples will show that this is not difficult

(i) The garden wants weeding

I like reading stories about adventure

I prefer going alone

It is no use crying about it

The pain in my tongue made speaking very difficult

In this group the *-ing* pattern is used as a primary,
but without a preposition

(ii) Having no medicine with him, the doctor went away

Calling his dog, he suddenly left the house

The man standing in the road was injured

He was heard repeating your name

In this group the *-ing* pattern is used as a secondary,
but without a preposition

(iii) The bell having rung, we went to our classes

Everything being ready, the concert began

We closed the shop, nobody wanting to buy anything from us.

In this group the *-ing* form is used as a tertiary, but without a preposition.

(iv) I am proud of being a teacher.

I admire you for doing that.

He spent £5 on travelling.

There are several ways of making money.

In this group the *-ing* pattern is the regimen of a preposition, employed in various ways, but not as a verb-qualifier.

(v) I shall do it before starting on my homework.

I read the book while travelling by train.

When writing composition, always have a dictionary beside you.

In this group the *-ing* pattern is the regimen of a preposition or of a connective adverbial, and the whole collocation is a tertiary qualifying the main verb.

Each of these, and variations on each, can be used as the basis of a table for instructional and practice purposes. The following are skeleton tables only which should be expanded by treating each column in turn as a variable. Thus in the first column of the first table the verbs *began*, *stopped*, *kept on*, *tried*, *avoided*, *considered*, *remembered*, *understood*, *hated*, *advised*, *forbade*, *regretted*, *defended*, *feared*, *enjoyed*, *suggested*, *admitted* could be inserted.

(i) The *-ing* form used as a primary, without a preposition:

| | |
|------------------|--------------------------------|
| I like | painting pictures of this kind |
| She much prefers | spending money on jewellery |

(ii) Used as a secondary, without a preposition

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| The man | standing in the road holding the box of explosive carrying the red box | was injured |
| Calling his dog, Raising his hat, Turning his back upon us, Having no medicine with him, | | he suddenly left the house |
| We could hear him They found the little child | | calling your name pulling a box to pieces whispering through the key hole |

(iii) Used as a tertiary, without a preposition
(Nominative Absolute)

| | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Everything being ready, The ship having left the quay, None of the people wishing to buy anything, | the shopkeeper closed his shop |
|---|-----------------------------------|

(iv) Used as a tertiary, with a preposition

| | | |
|------------|----|---|
| I am tired | of | hearing you talk sitting on this chair listening to him |
|------------|----|---|

- (v) Used as a tertiary, with a preposition, with direct reference to a main verb:

| | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| I shall work out the sum | after before without while | doing my homework resting on my bed having my dinner looking at my arithmetic book |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|

Special practice should be given in collocations based on a preposition. It will be noticed, in the examples given above, how frequently the *-ing* form is the regimen of a preposition:

| | | |
|------------|---|------------------|
| instead of | } | writing a letter |
| after | | |
| before | | |
| besides | | |
| by | | |
| for | | |
| like | | |
| through | | |
| without | | |
| to | | |
| about | | |
| except | | |

7. *Objects after transitives* are omitted, inserted where not required, or misapplied:

We saw him play football and we admired.

We went to the cinema and thoroughly enjoyed.

We know that you stole.

He ran so fast that I could not catch

I know how to do

This is not fit to drink it

This is the king's horse which he rides it every day

Is there anything which you want it which I can
get it for you?

Here is another book which I don't know where to
put it

The man who I am sure he is in the house has only
one arm

These are the books you were looking for them

The picture arrived but he did not wish to see

(a) The objective is omitted because the pupil thinks that as it has been mentioned once that should be sufficient. The practice table must therefore cover this point, attaching the objective firmly to its verb

| | | | |
|-----------------|-----|----|---|
| We saw the film | and | we | admired it enjoyed it liked it hated it remembered it |
|-----------------|-----|----|---|

(b) The objective is put in where it is not wanted because the pupil overlooks the fact that it is already represented in the relative. The relative must therefore be stressed and joined to the verb. A second drill will omit the relative

| | | | |
|---------|---------------------------------|------|--|
| This is | the one the horse the car | that | he wants I bought she got they looked at they waited for |
|---------|---------------------------------|------|--|

| | | |
|---------|---------------------------------|--|
| This is | the one the car the horse | I want he bought they waited for |
|---------|---------------------------------|--|

8. *Articles, definite and indefinite*, are mishandled because it is a characteristic of English that the article is used more sparingly than in many other languages:

We were great friends. He enjoys good health.
Nous étions des grands amis. Il jouit d'une bonne santé.
If the word is sufficiently specialized without the article, the article is omitted:

I have had breakfast. (*It is quite clear which breakfast.*)

The breakfast I had at his house was very good. (*The article is needed to specify the particular breakfast.*)

So also:

Gold is found here.

The gold found here is of poor quality.

The abuse of the article results in a number of common errors well known to teachers overseas:

The light is dull so we cannot take the good photographs.

He plays football and violin.

Let us go and have the good dinner.

She takes the interest in her work.

There is no doubt that Brown was thief.

He took a somebody else's bat.

He is bad man.

I am a best boy in the class.

She was such good girl that she got prize.

He is a too big boy for that class.

My mother goes to bazaar every day.

It costs a pint for a shilling.

(a) Type *Go to church, go to the church*

The article is usually omitted when the purpose, not the place, is in mind. The drill table will therefore show the difference.

| | | |
|-----------|-------------|--|
| He etc | goes etc | to church to pray to school to learn to bed to sleep to hospital for treatment to college for lectures to court to hear cases |
|-----------|-------------|--|

| | |
|-----------|--|
| I went to | the church with the red door the school at the end of this road the bazaar and the shops the bed with a blanket on it the hospital (=a particular hospital) the college (=a particular college) the court (=a particular courthouse) |
|-----------|--|

(b) Other errors in the use of the article must be corrected by separate drills.

| | | |
|---------------------|-----------------|---|
| We will do the work | after before | breakfast lunch tea dinner school church |
|---------------------|-----------------|---|

| | | |
|----------|--|--|
| He plays | games football cricket hockey chess cards | an instrument the violin the piano the trumpet the big drum the organ |
|----------|--|--|

| | | |
|-------|---------------------|---|
| He is | bad good kind | a bad man a good worker a kind friend |
|-------|---------------------|---|

| | | |
|------------|--|---|
| This costs | a penny a shilling a pound twopence | a pint a pound an ounce a bottle |
|------------|--|---|

9. *Concord and Number* as sources of error are limited to pronouns (especially quantitatIVES and partitives *some, more, both*) and nouns (especially uncountables *furniture, ammunition*):

Every boy and every girl in the class are present and have their books.

Each one of us all are to blame.

You and he is not yet ready.

Father, mother and the little child was taken to hospital.

There are a lot of smokes and dirt.

I bought some good furnitures.

(b) For *uncountables* the most effective method is to drill the use of *uncountables* with contrasting quantitatives:

| | | | |
|--------------|--------|-------------------|------------|
| many | | much | |
| not many | | not much | |
| very many | | very much | corn |
| too many | | too much | rice |
| a great many | | a great deal of | sugar |
| a few | pens | a little | dust |
| very few | nails | very little | smoke |
| too few | screws | too little | grass |
| a few more | | a little more | coffee |
| many more | | much more | furniture |
| a great | | a great | ammunition |
| many more | | a great deal more | |

10. *Degree, Comparison and Similitude* cause such troubles as:

I am very much thankful.

I prefer this than that.

I am a best boy in the class.

This is largest past all.

I am very tired that I cannot work.

He is happy as a king.

These difficulties arise because attention has been focused on the teaching of the formal inflexions rather than on meaning. In meaning, there are three possibilities in comparison:

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| (i) superiority | (better than) |
| (ii) equality | (as good as) |
| (iii) inferiority | (not so tall as) |

In tables:

| | | | |
|---------|--|---------|--|
| This is | heavy very heavy too heavy for me too heavy to lift heavy enough as heavy as that | This is | better better than that much better very much better a great deal better |
|---------|--|---------|--|

| | |
|---------|--|
| This is | the heaviest the heaviest in the box the heaviest of all |
|---------|--|

| | | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------|------------------------|----|------|
| This is This one is Yours is | as not so | good heavy clean | as | that |
|------------------------------------|--------------|------------------------|----|------|

11 *The past or passive participle has uses similar to those of the -ing form and gives rise to similar errors*

He sat with his arms were folded

They came back with all their money was gone.

The king gave medals to the soldiers were wounded in the war

Here is the result which obtained by this method

Being the field was bounded by four high walls we could not get in

Perhaps the best drill for a collocation based on a past participle is to give a number of such collocations and then require the class to put them into a given table.

bought by my father

burned in the fire

frightened by the thieves

wounded by your spear

fed on this kind of food

referred to in this letter

agreed to by the members

pointed out by the farmer

looked at by the inspector

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| Have you seen | the picture the bullock <i>etc.</i> | bought by my father referred to in this letter <i>etc.</i> |
| The picture The bullock <i>etc.</i> | bought by my father referred to in this letter <i>etc.</i> | cost a lot of money |

Closely related is the use of the passive voice generally. It is likely that the usual method of teaching the passive is directly responsible for error. It is (or was) commonly taught by requiring the class to change *Henry hit John* into *John was hit by Henry*. But that is not the most frequent use of the passive. In at least seventy per cent. of cases the agent is not mentioned:

He was killed in the war.

The building was totally destroyed.

The bodies were burned, not buried.

Only where the agent is of greater interest than the subject is the *by* form used:

The house was struck by lightning.

Indeed, in many cases the active subject cannot suitably be expressed as the agent:

He suffered great torture.

He lost his father in the war.

The horse broke its leg.

In the passive:

He was tortured

His father was killed.

Its leg was broken.

It is worth while, therefore, to drill the passive voice in this form; both to practise the natural use of the passive and to revise prepositions:

| | |
|----|---|
| He | was laughed at was looked upon as a great man was sent for was taken care of was knocked over was listened to with great attention was not spoken to was much sought after |
|----|---|

12 *Individual words*, forming 'private collocations', are responsible for many errors, and they are usually listed in text-books as 'Words commonly confused' or 'Miscellaneous idiomatic expressions'. Such lists are not really very helpful to the learner, they contain too much. The only safe course open to the teacher is to take these words as they come, either in the reading or, less happily, in the form of a 'mistake', and to drill each in its own use. Typical words of this kind are

do (repetitive), structural verbs in inversions, used to, but, ought to, about to, as, such, latter, otherwise, too, yet, and idiomatic uses of heavily-worked verbs such as *go, get, make* (*go to, in, by, for, on, with, through, without, against, off, out, in, for, on with*)

The following are offered as examples of the method

(a) He told me to eat it and I ate

| | | | | |
|--------------|----------------|-----|------|--------|
| He told me | to eat it | | I | |
| I told him | to spell it | and | he | did so |
| | to go away | | | |
| We told them | to stand still | | they | |
| | to work harder | | | |

(b) I must go to bed and so you must.

The inversion is shown clearly by ending on a nominative pronoun:

| | | | | | |
|------|---------------------|---|--------|---------------------|----------------------|
| They | must can will | do it eat it stay here go to bed | and so | must can will | I he she we |
|------|---------------------|---|--------|---------------------|----------------------|

(c) He is as bold like a lion.

Let the *as* be made very plain:

| | | | | |
|---------|-----------|--------|----|--------|
| | <i>or</i> | | | |
| He is | as | bold | as | a lion |
| This is | as | big | as | a ... |
| ... is | as | strong | as | a ... |
| | as | ... | as | |

(d) Our teacher used to give us homework every night
(the reference is to the present).

The time factor requires stressing:

| | | | |
|---|--------------------------------|---------|---|
| Last year A year ago Some time ago Last term | our teacher my father he | used to | give me homework help me praise my work |
| <i>but he doesn't do it now</i> | | | |

(e) Although he is tall but he is weak

Here a contrast is needed

| | | | | |
|----------|------------------------------|------------------------------|--|--|
| Although | this is this is | hard long thick etc | it is | cheap weak very light not heavy |
| This is | hard long thick etc | but it is | cheap weak very light not heavy | |

The aim in this chapter has been to demonstrate that it is possible to relate a common error to one or other of the standard patterns, and to give examples

The next chapter will deal with a single model, that based on the preposition, and offer suggestions for drilling that pattern into the pupil's mind until it becomes an habitual mode of thought

CHAPTER SEVEN

DRILLING-IN

ERRORS should not occur if correct constructions become automatic and habitual; and habit comes from practice. Drill cannot be avoided. If the instructor avoids it, the pupil must accumulate examples on his own account and try them over mentally in a drill of his own making. In this matter the writer can only urge the success of his own practice and the practice of others who have used the device of the 'substitution table' developed by H. E. Palmer¹ into a most powerful teaching instrument.

If it is agreed that an English sentence is not a run of words like pearls on a string but an ordered pattern of word groups; or even if it is agreed only that important word groups are recognizable, then it is incumbent upon the teacher to see that his pupils master those group-patterns as early and as thoroughly as he can make them do so. That being done, the pupil will never be reduced to adding word to word by the light of nature and with the help of such 'rules' as he may misremember.

The process will be most effective if it is organized with thought and care. The present chapter, taking the preposition phrase as the instance, sets out in detail one method of drilling a pattern as the writer has developed it.

In ordinary prose, a hundred simple sentences will contain about three hundred prepositions. If errors come because an opportunity arises for the pupil to make a mistake, prepositions give plenty of opportunity. And mistakes are not lacking:

¹ *One Hundred Substitution Tables*, H. E. PALMER. Hefner, Cambridge

This is the man I wish to speak.
 I insisted to pay my school fees
 You may order for the books
 He does not listen my words
 The match starts from two o'clock.
 In the way we met a beggar.
 The man is near the door is my brother.

Where have you been from such a long time?

Whole, half and quarter mistakes such as these defy classification, but it is possible at least to distinguish three roots from which they derive inability to construct the word group from the right materials (*The match starts from two o'clock*), misunderstanding of the function performed by the word group in the place to which it is allotted (*The man is near the door is my brother*); and uncertainty in the idiomatic application of an individual preposition (*The man I wish to speak*)

These weaknesses arise, and call for treatment, early in the course. Tables such as the following should be used with quite junior pupils, and frequently.

(1) *Structure of the frame*

| | | | |
|------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|--|
| <i>simple location</i> | <i>The man etc</i> | <i>is is standing etc</i> | <i>near the door between the door and the window etc</i> |
|------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|--|

| | | | |
|-------------------|----------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <i>instrument</i> | <i>He etc.</i> | <i>tried to cut it etc</i> | <i>with a chisel with a saw etc</i> |
|-------------------|----------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|

| | | | |
|--------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| <i>agent</i> | The man <i>etc.</i> | was killed was seen <i>etc.</i> | <i>by a lion</i> <i>by somebody else</i> <i>etc.</i> |
|--------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|

| | | | |
|------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|--|
| <i>-ing form</i> | He <i>etc.</i> | went to sleep <i>etc.</i> | <i>while translating the letter</i> <i>without shutting the door</i> <i>on leaving his work</i> <i>etc.</i> |
|------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|--|

(2) *Function of the frame:*

| | | | |
|-------------------|------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| <i>Adjectival</i> | The man <i>etc.</i> | <i>near the door</i> <i>between the door</i> <i>and the window</i> <i>etc.</i> | suddenly fell down <i>etc.</i> |
|-------------------|------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|

| | | | |
|------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|---|
| <i>Adverbial</i> | One of the dogs <i>etc.</i> | ran <i>etc.</i> | <i>round about the houses</i> <i>for three hours on end</i> <i>like an engine</i> <i>in spite of the heat</i> <i>before getting the signal</i> <i>etc.</i> |
|------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|---|

(3) *Individual prepositions*

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>The man wants something Have you got anything</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>etc</i></p> | <p><i>to sit on</i> <i>to write with</i> <i>to think about</i> <i>to look at</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>etc</i></p> |
|--|--|

It will be convenient to consider each of these groups in turn and to formulate suitable drills for each

With regard to the first, *structure of the frame*, any grammar book will provide examples of the various ways in which prepositional collocations are built up

with nouns near the door, over the wall, round the parcel

with pronouns for me, from several of them, opposite to his own

with -ing forms before beginning the lesson; without shutting the door

with infinitives in order to find him, so as to avoid an accident

introducing phrases from behind the door, from under the table, by means of , in spite of , on account of , etc

introducing clauses It depends upon whether he agrees or not

attached closely to a verb He is the man I am looking for

These will not, of course, be taught together. The essence of success is to provide just that help which is required at the moment, and no more. When the occasion presents itself, it should be seized promptly and tables such as these should be drilled in order to fix the correct structure

With nouns:

| | | | |
|--------------|---|-------|---|
| Where is it? | On the table Under the door <i>etc.</i> | It is | on the table under the door <i>etc.</i> |
|--------------|---|-------|---|

| | |
|---|---|
| Please put it Tell him to put it Have you put it Take this book and put it | on the table under the door <i>etc.</i> |
|---|---|

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|------------|--------------------------|
| The red book <i>etc.</i> | on the table under the door <i>etc.</i> | belongs to | me him <i>etc.</i> |
|-----------------------------|---|------------|--------------------------|

Suitable exercises, based on tables such as these, for constructing collocations of the preposition + noun type are:

- (i) Add suitable nouns to:
over; off; inside; into; out of; against; behind; *etc.*
- (ii) Put suitable prepositions in front of:
that boat; my leather bag; the office door; the garden wall; the wheel of the lorry; *etc.*
- (iii) Put suitable phrases where there are brackets:
The most important person (. . .) is the lawyer.
The first part (. . .) did not amuse me.
The chair (. . .) was covered with dust.

(iv) Put in suitable prepositions

My friend lives the first house . . . the street
 church You can pick out his house . the
 colour the door and the large window . . . the
 top the roof There is a small garden . .
 front the house and a large one . . the back

(v) Look at your left hand and make up ten preposition phrases about it (*under my thumb-nail*), then put the phrases into sentences*With pronouns*

| | | | |
|-------------------------|--|-----------|---|
| The bridge It etc | was built was designed was destroyed | by for | you me him them the others none of those men themselves |
|-------------------------|--|-----------|---|

(i) Add suitable prepositions to

us, them, those, this one, the others, ours, theirs,
 his own, your own, myself

(ii) Use these in sentences

to these, from the other, opposite neither of them,
 for some of that, with all of it, against both of them

(iii) These small tables contain thirty preposition phrases

Use the phrases in sentences of your own

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|--------------------------------|--|
| opposite past towards | everyone both of them each other the first two some of the others | in front of like without | my own mine the next one either any of these |
|-----------------------------|---|--------------------------------|--|

With -ing forms:

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|--|--|
| The poor old man etc. | fell asleep sat down wept | in the middle of before after without instead of through | doing it seeing me speaking telling the story weighing the meat etc. |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|--|--|

- (i) Put the phrases at the beginning of sentences, e.g.:
In the middle of weighing the meat, the poor old man sat down.
- (ii) Put suitable prepositions in front of:
writing the letter telling the truth
using a knife emptying the bottle
borrowing the money copying the exercise
turning the handle working the sum a
writing to his father second time
- (iii) Think of some actions and fill in the brackets:
He (. . .) in the middle of telling the story.
As well as (. . .) he read a good book.
She (. . .) instead of doing her lessons.
The little boy (. . .) without looking at the driver of the car.
- (iv) Take this phrase: *writing to the manager*. Put in front of it each of the prepositions given below, in turn. Then use each preposition phrase in a sentence of your own.
Example: On writing to the manager, he learned the truth.
Prepositions to use: besides; about; in spite of; for; in addition to; like; with the intention of; by; on the point of.

With infinitives

| | | |
|-------------------------|--|---|
| The soldier stood up | in order to so as to in order not to so as not to | hide his gun dip the cloth into the water hit me on the head frighten me etc |
|-------------------------|--|---|

- (i) What must you do
in order to live? so as to earn money?
so as not to fail? etc
- (ii) Finish with a preposition + infinitive phrase
The swimmer dived into the water
I hit the nail etc

With phrases

| | | |
|--|--|---------------------|
| The commander came to see me etc | with regard to on account of from behind | the old fort etc |
|--|--|---------------------|

- (i) Make phrases with
by means of instead of, in spite of, from inside,
from the top of

With clauses

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|---|
| The steamship left the harbour | before after | the whistle blew etc |
| The answer etc | depends upon | whether the sign is plus or minus etc |

(i) Add suitable clauses:

What happened before . . . ?

(ii) Give suitable answers beginning with *whether*:

We argued . . .

He decided to find out . . .

They must determine . . .

With time groups:

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>I will do the work Please come and see me <i>etc.</i></p> | <p>by to-morrow afternoon on Sunday next on Monday in the winter during the summer at one o'clock <i>etc.</i></p> |
| <p>My grandfather died This must have been written <i>etc.</i></p> | <p>before my first birthday on the last day of January at the beginning of the year <i>etc.</i></p> |

(i) Practise *since* with dates:

I have been here since Saturday.

(ii) Practise *for* with periods of time:

I have been here for four hours.

The second source of weakness, misapprehension about function, is seen in such errors as

The man is near the door is my brother.

It will be noticed that this mistake occurs more frequently with the verb *to be* than with any other; it is therefore advisable to drill it first without a verb at all and then

with any verb other than *is*, in order to demonstrate the adjectival function

| | | | |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|---|
| The first boy The other boy <i>etc</i> | chose looked at bought wrote in <i>etc</i> | the book the one <i>etc</i> | on the table in the box under the counter in the shop window on the chair <i>etc</i> |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|---|

| | | |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| The person <i>etc</i> | near the door with one blind eye in the middle of the circle in the back row without any money in front of me <i>etc</i> | began to cry walked away shouted for help <i>etc</i> |
|--------------------------|---|---|

The third source of trouble, the attached preposition, shows itself early. It is never long before a teacher is faced with

I have no chair to sit

He explained me very well

Time is well spent in fixing the preposition very firmly to its verb through drills such as these

| | | | |
|---------------|---|----|---|
| I | | | |
| What do we | sit on? write with? look at? think about? look for? <i>etc</i> | We | sit on chairs write with pens look at pictures think about our lessons look for our books <i>etc</i> |

| | | | | |
|----|------------------|---------------------------------------|----------|--|
| II | What don't we | sit on? write with? <i>etc.</i> | We don't | sit on nails write with mud <i>etc.</i> |
|----|------------------|---------------------------------------|----------|--|

| | | | |
|-----|-------|--|---|
| III | Do we | sit on chairs? sit on nails? write with pens? write with walking-sticks? <i>etc.</i> | Yes, we do. No, we don't. Yes, we do. No, we don't. <i>etc.</i> |
|-----|-------|--|---|

| | | |
|----|---|--|
| IV | The head of the school | is sitting on a chair sat on a chair won't sit on that chair has been sitting on this chair |
| | Your friend Somebody over there <i>etc.</i> | wrote with my pen is writing with a gold pen will write with this pen <i>etc.</i> |

| | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| V | My uncle | looked for me |
| | The man who brought the money | took care of me |
| | The captain of the merchant ship | sat on a chair |
| | <i>etc.</i> | agreed with me <i>etc.</i> |

| | | | |
|----|---------------|--|--|
| VI | Who(m) did | my uncle the man who brought the money the captain of the merchant ship <i>etc.</i> | ask for? take care of? agree with? look for? <i>etc.</i> |
|----|---------------|--|--|

Various exercises can be done with each of those six tables

- (i) Read the sentences
- (ii) Give new Subjects
 - What do (cats) look for?
 - What don't (elephants) look for?
 - Do (monkeys) look for nuts?
- (iii) Give new Objects
 - We sit on (benches/forms/the floor)
 - My uncle took care of (my dog/the money)
 - Did the captain of the merchant ship write with (a piece of chalk/a paint brush)?

It is much better fun if the question forms are asked by the pupils, and the teacher has to answer them. The pupils will try hard to think of posers to catch him out.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists sixty-three different meanings against the preposition *of*. Perhaps some of the difficulty we experience with prepositions in our classrooms is due to the fact that we have taken them too lightly even in our own private reading. The great freedom with which prepositions have taken to themselves figurative meanings (we *walk to* a place and we also *refer to* it) has often enabled one preposition to trespass in the field of another, so that while we can be struck *by* (and only *by*) lightning, we can be struck *by* the peculiar colour of a friend's face, or we can be struck *with* the peculiar colour. It is sometimes possible to discover a thread which will lead us, and perhaps our pupils, through the maze. An example is this confusion between *with* and *by*. This can be kept at a distance by drilling a 'standard sentence'

He was beaten on the back with a whip by a gaoler.
With carries the idea of something or somebody accompanying something or somebody else. *By* conveys much

more strongly the idea of an agent. Thus we are *covered with mud, weary with weeping, dissatisfied with our work and beaten with a whip. But we are wounded by bullets, compelled by force, carried by elephants and beaten by gaolers.*

Of, with its sixty-three senses, is not disposed of so easily. Its fundamental modern meaning is *possession*. Thus, I have the *taste of paint* in my mouth; but a *taste for painting* is merely figurative. So it comes about that purely personal judgements are expressed with *of*:

conscious of; approve of; ignorant of; fond of.

For, on the other hand, conveys the idea of *purpose*, outside oneself, so that we have:

fitted for; suitable for; to look for; appeal for; have a use for.

To carries the sense of *direction*; so that we *agree to* a proposal, but *agree with* a person. We are *deaf to* an argument, *inclined to* a course of action, *liable to* error, *sensitive to* cold, and we may sometimes refer to the fact that *To all appearances the chances are three to one.*

This is neither a grammar book nor a dictionary, but only a talk with fellow teachers on difficulties which plague us all. It is not, therefore, the place for an essay on the vagaries of the English preposition. It is suggested only that the subject is worth some private thought, and that exercises such as those suggested here are worth trying.

CHAPTER EIGHT

DRILLING-OUT

ANY GOLFER about to make a drive, any tennis player about to serve a ball in his game, knows well enough that if there is any uncertainty or lack of confidence in his mind, if a feeling comes over him, 'I know I'm going to make a mess of this one,' then surely enough he will make a mess of it. How often, we may wonder, is the pupil in the act of preparing to write an English sentence in that frame of mind? We have all seen the wrinkled brows and the pen nibbling which are the plain signs of uncertainty and no confidence. With his pen dripping ink and his page blank before him the pupil is indeed too often

An infant crying in the night,
An infant crying for the light,
And with no language but a cry.

An American writer on English¹ has a chapter entitled 'Subversive Elements'. That title is well chosen, for English is full of pitfalls which seem to be specially designed to entrap the most careful learner, and every sympathy is due to even the brightest pupil when he strives to select the correct pattern from all those which present themselves—and gets it wrong.

However alert the teacher, however anxious the pupil, some errors will creep in, repeat themselves and, if not taken in time, harden into immovables. These are indeed 'dangerous thoughts' to be eradicated with all the thoroughness and promptitude of which the watchful teacher is capable. We have discussed the drilling-in of the correct usage, we turn now to the drilling-out of error, and as

¹ MAXWELL NURNBERG, *What is the Good Word?*

our example we take the familiar dependent question

I want to know where is it.

If it is true that laws are effective *after* crimes have been committed and prevention comes before both law and crime, it will be no insurance against error to give the learner dogmatic regulations about the inversion of the Subject and Verb in questions; for it is evident from the difficulties surrounding the case that regulations about Subject-Verb position can only add to the confusion:

Are you ill? He asked if you were ill.

$V - S - P$ $S - V - P$

Who did it? He asked me who did it.

$(S) - V - O$ $(S) - V - O$

Habit, not law, is required. Our task indeed is to prevent the pupil becoming an habitual offender; for an incorrect form, repeated many more times mentally than we ever see it written in the exercise book, can very quickly become fixed.

Before deciding what to do in order to drill out the dependent question error, it is wise to look at it from the pupil's point of view and see what he finds lying in and around *I want to know where is it*.

There is, first, the operation or non-operation of quotation marks:

'Where is it?'

The pupil may reasonably doubt whether the removal of a printer's 'quotes', which do not appear in speech, really requires a major re-shuffling of the words; and the disappearance of the question mark seems illogical.

That raises the second difficulty: in some cases the question mark is undoubtedly required:

Can you please tell me where it is?

Did he really say, 'Where is it?'?

The third difficulty resides in the verb *is*. It may be a

structural verb as in *He is going* or it may be a main verb as in *He is ill*. English we remember, is very tenacious of the S V order and insists on maintaining it with main verbs even in questions

Where was he going?

v - S - V

but is less concerned with the pre-Subject position of the structural *was*

To make the whole thing more difficult there is always in the background the complication of indirect speech concerning which the pupil remembers many warnings

Where is it? He asked me where it *was*

In circumstances such as these the brightest pupil may well hesitate even the best needle is not sharp at both ends. To assist him we may deal first with a single word verb avoiding the complications of structurals and doubles like *was going have done*. We take then the verb *to be* as a main verb and show it before and after the Subject. This is done in Tables I-VI below

The second step is to dispose of the quotation marks complication. This is done in Tables VII and VIII

The third step introduces the structural verb complication. See Tables IX and X

Next we deal with *do* which appears from nowhere

He lives here

Does he live here?

I want to know whether he lives here

That provides Tables XI-XIIa

So far we have drilled only *fixed* questions requiring *Yes* or *No* for an answer. The fifth step must therefore introduce the *free* question and its interrogatives *when where how* etc. Tables XIII-XVIII

That is the plan of campaign as a demonstration of the

use of the substitution table as a teaching device for the purpose we have in hand, we will develop it in detail.

Step 1: The single-word verb

Drill the two forms side by side and in their simplest form in the simplest tenses; direct speech in odd-number tables; indirect speech in even-number tables.

I

II

| | | | | |
|-------|--|----------------------|-------|---|
| Where | am I? is he? are you? are we? are they? was John? was the sentry? were the men? were the animals? <i>etc.</i> | I want to know | where | I am he is you are we are they are John was the sentry was the men were the animals were <i>etc.</i> |
|-------|--|----------------------|-------|---|

For drill purposes, vary the Subject, first in the Singular:

III

IV

| | | | | | |
|-------------|---|----------------------|-------|---|----|
| Where is | it? the other one? John? your friend? the railway station? (any other suggestions) | I want to know | where | it the other one John your friend the railway station <i>etc.</i> | IS |
|-------------|---|----------------------|-------|---|----|

Then in the Plural

V

VI

| | | | | | |
|--------------|--|----------------------|-------|---|-----|
| Where are | the others? your exercises? the long ones? the books you want? (any other suggestions) | I want to know | where | the others your exercises the long ones the books you want etc | ARE |
|--------------|--|----------------------|-------|---|-----|

Step 2 Tables I to VI should suffice to drill the essential factor of Subject-Verb position in the simplest dependent form. Variations may now introduce quotation marks in the direct forms and, with them, alternative preliminaries in the dependent forms

VII

VIII

| | | | |
|-----------------------|---|--|---|
| The question is | Where am I? (and Table I) | I want to know Please tell me We must find out I can't think Let us ask the gardener I shall enquire | where I am (and Table II) |
| | Where is it? (and Table III) | | where it is (and Table IV) |
| | Where are the others? (and Table V) | | where the others are (and Table VI) |

Step 3 At this point we pause to consider the possibilities opened up by the introduction of ordinary verbs—so far, we have considered only *to be*—coupled unavoidably, in questions, with structurals

Will he go? I want to know whether he will go
Was he going? I want to know whether he was going

The frames for the next tables will be, therefore:

$v - S - V$ $x? \quad S - v - V$

Will he go? ... whether he will go

In the case of transitive verbs which certainly must be dealt with at this stage, the frames are:

$v - S - V - O$ $S - v - V - O$

Will he do it? I want to know whether he will do it.

This provides the patterns for Tables IX and X.

IX

X

| | | | | | | |
|-------|-------------------------|----------|------------------|---------|-------------|-------------|
| Will | he | come? | I want | | he | will |
| Can | you | do it? | to know | whether | | come |
| Would | your friend | under- | Please | | <i>etc.</i> | can |
| Must | the other | stand? | tell me | | | do it |
| | people | buy one? | | | | would |
| | (any other suggestions) | | (see Table VIII) | | | ... |
| | | | | | | <i>etc.</i> |

In order to drill in these tables, such exercises as the following can be employed:

(i) Suggest other Subjects and repeat the tables with them:

| | |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| your uncle | the chairman of the committee |
| somebody else | a soldier returned from the war |
| anybody | the boy in the back row |
| everybody | any of those old people |
| that old man | the school caretaker |
| this lorry driver | Dr. John Smith. |
| | <i>etc.</i> |

(ii) Suggest other Verbs and repeat the tables with them:

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| eat it | do this exercise |
| sleep there | learn these tables |
| stand quite still | copy this page |
| tell the man to get one | speak to the headmaster |
| order the workmen to go away | |

(iii) Add adverbials at the end and so lengthen each sentence

| | |
|-----------------|----------------------------|
| on Friday | at the end of the lesson |
| afterwards | in the middle of the night |
| at once | during the morning |
| next week | without any trouble |
| before Thursday | in order to please me |
| quickly | before the bell rings |

(iv) More advanced pupils might be required to show that their answers to the preceding exercises comply with the formulae V-S-V-O and S-v-V-O

Step 4. Having thus disposed of the simplest form in the simplest tense, and of the usual auxiliary verbs, the teacher must make clear the work done by the verb *do*. The class will see, or perhaps they will have to be shown, that *do* finds a place in the direct question form but not in the dependent form (unless it bears its full meaning. *I do it every day*). The point can be pressed home by tabulating both present and past tenses, but in the latter case we will use verbs like *eat*, *ate*, rather than verbs like *cut*, *cut*

XI

XII

| | | | | | | |
|------|----------------------------|---|--|---------|--------------------|--|
| Does | he | live here? like it? learn English? learn these tables? | I want to know (and Table I III) | whether | he | lives here likes it learns English learns these tables |
| | the girl | | | | the girl etc | |
| | (any other suggestions) | | | | | |

XIa

XIIa

| | | | | | | |
|-----|------------|--|---------------------------|---------|------------|---|
| Did | he etc. | like it? eat it? drink it? build that house? (any other suggestions) | I want to know etc. | whether | he etc. | liked it ate it drank it built that house etc. |
|-----|------------|--|---------------------------|---------|------------|---|

The exercises prepared for Tables IX and X can, of course, be applied here also.

Step 5. The next step takes the class on to the variations created by the use of interrogatives other than the simple and inoffensive *whether*.

There are three main groups of interrogatives, considered from the point of view of our present purpose. Let $x^?$ represent the interrogative:

(i) Adverbial interrogatives which do not disturb the Subject-Verb positions already taught, because both Subject and Verb are present:

Why/How/When/Where did he jump?
 $x^? \quad v-S-V$

I want to know why he jumped.
 $x^?-S-V$

(ii) Pronominal interrogatives representing an unknown Subject:

Who laughed? I want to know who laughed.
 $(S)x^?-V \quad (S)x^?-V$

What ate it? I want to know what ate it.
 $(S)x^?-V-O \quad (S)x^?-V-O$

(iii) Pronominal interrogatives which represent an unknown Object, direct or indirect, allowing the Subject to appear

What did he eat I want to know what he ate

(O) x^2 - τ -S-V

(O) x^2 -S-V

What did he give you? I want to know what he gave you

(O) x^2 v-S-V O_i

(O) x^2 -S-V-O_i

Tables XIII and XIV drill adverbial interrogatives

(a) with *do* which appears only in the direct form,

(b) with other structural verbs which appear in both forms

XIII (x^2 - τ S-V)

(τ^2 - τ -S-V-O)

| | | | |
|---------|---|-------|---|
| Why | did he fall? | Where | does he sell his books? |
| When | must he run? | Why | can you learn the tables? |
| How far | are they going? can she jump? (any other suggestions) | When | will they buy a car? (any other suggestions) |

XIV (S-V)

(S-V-O)

| | | | | |
|------------------------------------|---------|--------------------------------|-------|-----------------------------------|
| I want to know (see Table VIII) | why | he fell | where | he sells his books |
| | when | he must run | why | you can learn |
| | how far | they are going she can jump | when | the tables they will buy a car |

For pronominal interrogatives the matter is not so simple. There is a fundamental difference between the case in which the Subject is asked for and that in which the Object is asked for. When the Subject is unknown, the direct and the dependent forms are the same.

Who laughed? I want to know who laughed.

Who was laughing? I want to know who was laughing.
and both repeat the standard statement order S-V.

S - V

Who laughed?

(I want to know) who laughed.

Where the Object is unknown, and the Subject is given, the Subject-Verb position is that already drilled in all the previous tables:

The structural verb precedes the Subject in the question

What are you eating?

(O)x? v S V

but not in the dependent form

I want to know what you are eating.

(O)x? S v V

Tables must therefore be constructed to deal with each of these variations. Tables XV and XVI can be used to practise the pronominal interrogative enquiring for the Subject; and Tables XVII and XVIII can be used to practise the pronominal interrogative enquiring for the Object.

XV Subject unknown
(S)x?

XVI
(No change)

| | | | | |
|-------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Who | moved? | I want to know etc. | who moved | |
| What | touched me? | | what touched me | |
| Which | struck the bell? | | who | |
| one | made that noise? | | what | |
| How | will do | | which | struck the bell |
| many | me harm? | | one | made that noise |
| | (any other suggestions) | | how many | etc. |

XVII Object unknown
(O)x⁹XVIII
(Change to S-1')

| | | | | |
|--------|----------------------------|---------|--------|-----------------------|
| What | are you looking at? | I want | what | you are looking at |
| Who(m) | does he wish to see? | to know | who(m) | he wishes to see |
| Which | did she want? | | which | she wanted |
| one | will you buy? | (and | one | you will buy |
| How | can they bring? | Table | how | they can bring |
| many | were they guarding? | VIII) | many | they were guarding |
| | (any other suggestions) | | | |

All these tables can be practised as they stand, even so, they will give plenty of drill Table XVIII, for example, contains 144 different sentences

But much more liveliness and interest will be introduced if the brighter pupils are allowed to suggest their own alternatives and the duller pupils are assisted by being given lists such as those placed below Table IX Thus, even a dull pupil utilizing the lists of alternative Subjects suggested under Table IX can produce 862 sentences in the pattern of Table XVIII

In this chapter we have taken a common error which is to be found wherever English is being learned as a second language, and we have considered a set of tables planned for the specific purpose of drilling-out each type of error which occurs in each aspect of the construction The process is at once positive and preventive, it teaches and it cures

As in the example here dealt with, the first step the teacher must take is to uncover the roots of the trouble; for there is often more than one He then compiles, for

each source of error, a number of standard sentences arranged in a substitution table. And he does this as early in his teaching as he can; for in the first years of learning

'(Now) 'tis the spring, and weeds are shallow rooted;
Suffer them now, and they'll o'er-grow the garden,
And choke the herbs for want of husbandry.'¹

¹ *Henry VI*, Part II, III, i.

CHAPTER NINE

ALTERNATIVE FORMS

THE USES to which substitution tables can be applied will meet most of the teacher's needs, instructional, diagnostic and preventive, but it must be admitted that in too heavy doses tables can kill interest. The teacher must have at hand alternative forms of exercise. Every class book provides these, but in the nature of the case text-book exercises confine themselves to one particular topic at a time and those are the conventional subdivisions of the grammar book.

Common errors are not, very often, cured by one kind of medicine, and if tables have been resorted to too frequently, the change of medicine which will do the patient good may not be readily available in the class book in use.

In this chapter there cannot be an exhaustive treatment of all the possible topics and all the suitable kinds of exercises. For purposes of demonstration, and in the hope of providing a page or two of material to which the hard-pressed teacher can turn at need, we will set out a few suggestions on the uses of the tenses, on prepositions, on infinite forms, and on the treatment of individual words that are troublesome.

1 On the Tenses

A. Simple Present Tense, four uses

- (i) habits and things always true, *Weeds grow quickly,*
- (ii) frequency
 - (a) adverb in front, *He often comes here,*

(b) periodically, adverb after verb, *It is published monthly*;

(iii) likely supposition, *If they come . . .*;

(iv) after *when*, etc., for future, *When he comes (I will tell him)*;

and the passive: *It is cleaned* (by somebody).

(a) Say something which is always true about:

cows; boys; girls; the blackboard in front of you, your right hand; this book.

(b) Say something which your teacher often does; never does; usually does; hardly ever does; sometimes does.

(c) Say something which you do once a week; every Monday; once in each year; every day; twice a month.

(d) Make up causes with these results: (*Example: The door will open if you push it.*)

... my father will be very pleased.

... I shall get good marks.

... I shall hurt my thumb.

... I shall make a blot.

... I shall stop doing this exercise.

... the papers on the teacher's desk will be blown about this room.

(e) Finish these sentences by stating a suitable event: (*Example: You will stop doing this lesson when the school bell rings.*)

I shall dip my pen in the ink when . . .

I shall dip my pen in the ink before . . .

I shall read the next exercise before . . .

The bus will stop when . . .

The bus will not stop before . . .

(f) Turn into the Passive Voice without mentioning the person who does the action:

Somebody cleans the windows of this class-room sometimes.

Somebody puts ink into our inkpots every morning
 Somebody marks my exercises with a blue pencil
 Somebody does the work in this class well
 Somebody does not do the work in that house well

B Simple Past Tense, three uses

- (i) simple past time, *I did it,*
- (ii) unlikely supposition, *If we flew to the moon* ,
- (iii) indirect speech form of the Simple Present, *He said coxes ate straw,*
 and the passive *It was written* (by somebody)

(a) Say something which

you did yesterday, your father did last week, the pupils in your class did last year, your teacher did yesterday morning the pupil sitting next to you did half an hour ago, a person you know did last Sunday evening, you did half a minute ago

(b) Make up actions, which in fact will not take place, but which would have these results (Example *If you went to Russia* you could see the Kremlin)

If you would be very surprised
 you could write a book about it
 it would be a very wonderful thing
 all the class would laugh
 your teacher would be very annoyed

(c) Turn into indirect speech

He said, 'The men in this regiment eat rice '
 'The exercises are very well done '
 'Some of these books have too many blots '
 'Nobody can do all this work in four minutes '

(d) Turn into the passive voice

During the war bombs killed many little children
 My teacher corrected my mistakes several times
 Somebody cleaned the blackboard

Somebody saw us.

There is a tear in this cloth. (*The pupil should be warned to change the whole of this sentence.*)

C. Simple Future Tense, two uses:

(i) with an adverbial meaning future time, *She will come to-morrow;*

(ii) the result of a likely supposition, (*If he comes*) *we will tell him;*

and the passive: *It will be done.*

(a) Say something which:

you will do to-morrow; your mother will do next week; your teacher will do the week after next; the door of the class-room will do in a few minutes; the pupil sitting next you will do in a quarter of an hour's time; the school caretaker will do during the day; you will do within the next three minutes.

(b) Say what the result will be:

If a pupil gets all these exercises correct . . .

If everybody comes to school early to-morrow . . .

If the headmaster (or headmistress) comes into this room . . .

If I get too much ink on my pen . . .

If the door opens and the wind blows in . . .

. . . if you go out in the rain.

. . . if he does not work harder.

. . . if the clock stops.

(c) Turn these into the passive voice without saying who does the action:

Somebody will open the door.

Something will spoil your work.

Somebody will eat this food.

Somebody will tear the cloth.

Something will upset the bottle of medicine.

D Future Preterite Tense (*I should write it*) two uses

(i) indirect speech form of the Future tense *He said he would write it*

(ii) result of an unlikely supposition (*If we flew to the moon*) *we should see strange things*
and the passive *It would be done*

(a) Turn into indirect speech

He said I shall go to London

They will come back here

The soldiers will spend all their pay

That stupid boy will get very few marks

(b) What would happen

If I went on the sea

If an elephant jumped into this class room

If we learned no lessons in school

If our teacher forgot to come to school to morrow

(c) There will be speeches at our prize giving

Somebody said speeches would be made

Say a similar sentence for

That island will be flooded by the sea

Your school report will be written to morrow

This bad writing cannot be read

E Present Perfect Tense two uses

(i) completed but without an adverbial of *past* time
(*I did it yesterday I have done it*)

(ii) begun in the past and still going on
and the passive *It has been sold*

(a) Say something which you have done

several times only once more than once already
scores of times

(*I have several times etc*)

- (b) Say something which you haven't done yet;
which you have just done for the first time.
- (c) Say something which you have not done for a month;
which you have not done for three weeks;
which you have not seen for a long time;
which you have never done.
- (d) Answer these questions in this form:
Where's the car? *It has been sold.*
Where is your old exercise book?
What has happened to this piece of cloth?
What has happened to the key of the class-room door?
Why doesn't the lock on that door work well?
Why is the grass so short on the football field?

F. Past Perfect Tense, three uses:

- (i) completed in past time, with an adverbial of past time denoting something else also completed in past time, *I had finished it before he spoke to me;*
- (ii) a past supposition which did not in fact occur, *If you had told me (I should have known);*
- (iii) indirect form of the Present Perfect, *He said that he had already bought one;*
and the passive: *It had been done before the whistle blew.*
- (a) Put the given verbs in the past perfect tense:
(do) He the sum before the bell rang.
(give) I my evidence before the judge asked for it.
(increase) The number of pupils in the school . . .
. before the new class was opened.
(grow) The grass a foot high before the holidays came to an end.

He says he . . . it for an hour already and is tired of it.

He says-he . . . it for an hour before the light went out.

(live) He . . . in London now.

In 1940, he . . . in London, but he doesn't live there now.

He . . . in London for twenty years and he still lives there.

He . . . in London at the time of his father's death.

He . . . in London, once upon a time.

(have) I wish I . . . a big car.

When you . . . a headache, do you take any medicine?

If you . . . a headache during the concert, will you take any medicine?

Suppose you . . . a headache now, would you take any medicine?

Suppose you . . . a headache, would you have taken any medicine?

2. Prepositions

Apart from the uses of the preposition-groups as these have been presented in a previous chapter, the pupil is in constant difficulty about which preposition to use; for example, agree *to* or agree *with*. No rules can be formulated for his guidance. He just has to learn to associate the right preposition with the right noun or verb, and this can come to him only through reading and practice. It is unfair, therefore, to set junior pupils exercises or tests such as those which follow; but examiners love them, and it will help the student anxiously approaching the dread 'exam.' if some practice is given. Such

practice should always be oral so that the teacher can jump in with the correct preposition before the learner has time to fix the wrong one by writing it down.

The teacher will save himself a lot of time and trouble (wasted in trying to think of examples) if he will draw upon a good dictionary. That is how the following exercises were composed.

(1) *at*

(a) *Straightforward examples*

| | | |
|---|---|---------------------------|
| We will meet We will wait We will see her | { | the station |
| | | the top of the hill |
| | | the corner of the street. |
| | | the meeting. |
| | | school |
| | | church |
| | | . dinner. |
| | | . home. |
| | | . his house |

| | | |
|-----------|---|----------------------------------|
| They were | { | good . . games |
| | | clever doing puzzles |
| | | surprised what I said |
| | | frightened . what they saw. |
| | | amazed . . what they heard. |

| | | |
|--------------|---|------------------|
| What are you | { | looking . . . ? |
| | | laughing ? |
| | | smiling . ? |
| | | guessing . . ? |
| | | working . ? |
| | | playing . . ? |
| | | amused . ? |
| | | annoyed . ? |

{ a distance of a mile.
 { an hour's notice.
 { a speed of thirty miles an hour.
 { a temperature of fifty degrees.
 ... { ten for a shilling.
 { the age of forty.
 { every shop in the town.
 { certain times.

(b) *Mixed examples (not all requiring 'at'):*

I go ... school every day and work ... my lessons.
 Meet me ... midday ... Sunday.
 He was born ... Akyab, a town ... Burma; but now
 he lives ... Accra.
 The monkey was sitting ... the roof ... the house
 ... the corner of the street.
 He stood ... the tree ... the top ... the hill.
 I sit ... this chair, but the teacher sits ... a table
 ... the door.
 I don't know what you are laughing ... or what you
 are talking ...
 Let us walk ... this hill ... the house ... the top.
 Go to his house and knock ... the door.
 Berne is ... Switzerland ... the foot ... a high
 mountain.
 He began ... line 10 ... page 5 ... the red reading-
 book.

(ii) *by:*

(a) *Straightforward:*

Stand { ... me.
 { ... the side of that table.
 { ... his side.
 { side ... side.

| | | |
|-------------|---|-------------------|
| It was sent | { | . post |
| | | sea |
| | | arr |
| | | mustake |
| | | chance |
| | | the shortest road |
| | | day |
| | { | hand |

(b) *Mixed*

It takes five hours train, but only half an hour .
 plane A car will take you there . three hours
 Do it your head mental arithmetic, or count
 it your fingers
 Draw this circle a pair of compasses and then
 divide it two drawing a line . . the middle
 The engine is driven petrol a very high speed
 I put it the side the table . mistake
 He is angry me because I laughed . . him . .
 Sunday
 The ball was driven the batsman . . . the window
 our school
 You can divide it two parts cutting it . . this
 knife

(iii) *for*(a) *Straightforward*

| | | |
|-----------|---|------------|
| He got it | { | a shilling |
| | | himself |
| | | me |
| | | nothing |
| | { | my sake |

Let us { ask
call
look
dig
wait
fight
search
work
go
send } ... it.

I { thank him
forgive him
pardon him
punished him } ... it.

It is { good ...
bad ...
better ...
impossible ...
possible ... } you to do that.

(b) *Mixed:*

I relied ... him to get one ... me.

The captain ... the ship asked ... a doctor ...
wireless.

I began ... working the first exercise but it was too
difficult ... me.

He was tried ... murder but he was acquitted ...
that crime ... the judge.

These are usually sold ... five ... a shilling but I got
them ... nothing.

She would not go ... plane ... fear ... an accident.

He earns his living carrying parcels . the station
 and he often works me
 That is a book . students but you cannot learn it
 heart even school

(iv) *from*

(a) *Straightforward*

. { morning to night
 ~~top to bottom~~
 beginning to end
 day to day
 door to door
 house to house
 place to place
 hand to hand
 time to time

I { refrained
 prevented him
 discouraged him } doing it
 excused him
 dissuaded him

I { borrowed it
 hired it
 took it } him
 copied it
 accepted it

(b) *Mixed*

They prevented me working my homework
 several hours
 the age of forty I was dismissed . . my post
 an hour's notice no reason at all

We must send . . . a doctor . . . the hospital; he will soon come . . . car and tell us what is the matter . . . you.

A nurse will look . . . you . . . hospital and she will prevent you . . . eating too much.

I used to go . . . church week . . . week, but recently my friends have dissuaded me . . . going.

When I stay . . . the country I walk . . . miles and miles and get fitter . . . day . . . day.

I have been . . . work here . . . a month, but I have learned nothing . . . my instructors; therefore I have nothing to thank them . . .

He agrees . . . me that we must be sure . . . the facts so that we can discuss them . . . others and distinguish the true . . . the false.

(v) of:

(a) *Straightforward*:

It is { good
kind
foolish
clever
wrong
brave } . . . you to try to do it.

I am { fond
ashamed
glad
proud
tired
sure
certain
sick
afraid } . . . it.

| | | |
|-----|--------|----|
| | back | |
| | front | |
| | middle | |
| | taste | |
| the | sight | it |
| | smell | |
| | cause | |
| | result | |
| | effect | |

(b) *Mixed*

The man went the house and round the back
the garden

The house is hidden us the hill and it is very
foolish us to wait here any longer

I rely you to look my luggage while I go
and clean the sleeve my overcoat the
waiting room

You have done nothing laugh me beginning
end and that is very foolish you

When he had finished the arithmetic book he
put it the side of his chair as though he were
tired the sight it

Is that a knock the door? If so it will be the
office boy calling that parcel Tell him he must
sign it please, as it is a matter great
importance

He hammered a nail the wall the purpose
hanging a large picture

3 On Uses of the Infinitive

- (1) Twelve men were shipwrecked on a desert island
Make up their names and write them in a list After

each man's name write one of these phrases in the order given:

- | | |
|----------------|----------------|
| 1 expected to | 7 attempted to |
| 2 wanted to | 8 agreed to |
| 3 prepared to | 9 promised to |
| 4 pretended to | 10 had to |
| 5 decided to | 11 appeared to |
| 6 forgot to | 12 began to |

Now complete each sentence, saying what the man *expected (etc.)* to do.

(ii) When that had happened, each man called to his neighbour and

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1 asked him to | 7 permitted him to |
| 2 told him to | 8 begged him to |
| 3 invited him to | 9 helped him to |
| 4 compelled him to | 10 persuaded him to |
| 5 forced him to | 11 dared him to |
| 6 allowed him to | 12 wished him to |

do something. What was it?

(iii) The King of Roumania once had a dog, a lion, a parrot, a mouse and a monkey. Write out the five things which the King of Roumania

| | | | |
|---|-----|---|-----|
| $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{made} \\ \text{let} \\ \text{heard} \\ \text{watched} \\ \text{saw} \end{array} \right\}$ | his | $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{dog} \\ \text{lion} \\ \text{parrot} \\ \text{mouse} \\ \text{monkey} \end{array} \right\}$ | do. |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

(iv) Write down two things which:

- you are able to do but a horse is unable to do;
- a policeman is bound to do;
- a horse is able to do but you are unable to do;
- your teacher is certain to do;

- (e) your neighbour is likely to do,
- (f) a very old motor car is inclined to do,
- (g) you often find it necessary to do,
- (h) difficult to do,
- (i) easy to do,
- (j) useless to do

(v) Pick out the infinitives, if there are any

When the officer had gone away the soldier forgot
all that he had said, because he didn't understand it
Did you hear them come in or did you only think
you heard them?

It is too hot to day to eat

I can't hear you speak but I don't want to make
you shout

Although the engineer said it could not be done, the
workmen showed that they could do it

If the dentist considers it necessary to have that tooth
out, you will have to have it out whether you like
it or not

All I said was that the occupant of the house paid the
rent in full after you had written to him

He certainly does look ill, but I wonder if he feels
as ill as he looks or looks as ill as he feels

If you will let me try, I will make this engine go,
but you had better get out of the way first

4 On Uses of the -ing form

(i) Make up sentences containing

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| his handwriting | the passing of examinations |
| the finished drawing | the sinking of the ship |
| through the opening | in thinking about it |
| a painful feeling | for scribbling in my book |

(ii) Make up sentences about:

| | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| an interesting book | an overtaking motor-car |
| an alarming appearance | a revolving wheel |
| a satisfying meal | an amusing story |
| the opposing army | a bisecting line |

(iii) Five men were busy doing different things.

- What were they doing?

(Example: You are busy answering these questions.)

(iv) Look at this:

*I looked up because I heard a noise on the roof.**Hearing a noise on the roof, I looked up.*

Now change these in a similar way:

The man climbed up because he saw a bird in the tree.

The sailor went into the cave alone because he was a brave man.

The girl took some medicine because she felt ill.

I kept quiet because I did not know the answers.

The thief returned the jewels because he expected to get a reward.

(v) Look at this:

*The sun rose and we went out.**The sun having risen, we went out.*

Now change these in a similar way:

The army was loyal to him, so the king was not afraid of the rebels.

The steamer left and the harbour was deserted.

The tooth was extracted and all the pain disappeared.

My answers were all incorrect, so I got no marks.

After he had entrusted his son to my care, the soldier went off to fight.

As all the rubbish from the town entered the river, the water became poisonous in a few days.

(vi) Look at this

When he came here, he made a serious mistake

In coming here, he made a serious mistake

Now change these in a similar way

Because you have spoiled your work, your teacher
will be angry with you

You will be sorry because you wrote that letter

He came here and then he went there

I shall do this before I read that

He has improved in English since he came to this
school

Before you buy a car, you must learn to drive

Until I had counted the money I was not sure how
much there was

5. Idiomatic uses of words can be learned only by
practice We will end with a few typical examples

(i) *as well* I bought this and the other one too

I bought this and the other one *as well*

Put *as well* in place of *too* or *also*, changing the order
of the words if necessary

You have one and I have one too

If you buy yourself a new pen, please buy one for
me *also*

The child is hungry and he wants something to drink
too

Copy this line and the one below it *too*

You may have read that book but have you *also* read
this one?

The poor man has ear-ache and he *also* has tooth-ache

(ii) *else* for *other* I gave it to another man

I gave it to somebody *else*

Now change these:

Is there any other person who can do this?

What other things have you got?

All the other people disagree with you.

She has some other things to say.

I did not see any other person.

Please do not put it here; put it in some other place.

Have you looked for it in any other place?

I said, 'No.' What other thing could I say?

He wants to talk to me; but he does not wish to see any other person.

I have one. Is there any other person who has one?

(iii) *with*:

(a) *the idea of accompanying: Come with me.*

Make similar sentences with:

| | | | |
|----------|--------------|----------|----------------|
| go | leave it | watch it | have a quarrel |
| walk | do it | read it | have a fight |
| sit here | argue it out | mix it | |
| eat | share it | | |

(b) *instrument: Cut it with a knife.*

Make similar sentences with:

| | | | |
|-------|--------|---------|--------|
| draw | fasten | lock | polish |
| paint | tie | rub | cover |
| write | open | scratch | mend |

(c) *reason: He is shaking with cold.*

Make similar sentences with:

| | | | | | |
|-------|------|-----|--------|--------|-------|
| anger | fear | joy | hunger | fright | shame |
|-------|------|-----|--------|--------|-------|

(iv) *so: (a) degree:*

(1) It was so hot that I couldn't touch it.

Make similar sentences with

| | | | |
|----------|-----------|---------------|---------|
| so cold | so sleepy | so tired | so rude |
| so heavy | so stupid | so badly hurt | so fat |

(2) I did not know it was so cold

Make similar sentences with

| | |
|-------------------|---------|
| I did not realize | suppose |
| think | believe |
| imagine | expect |

(b) *Concurring in what has been said*

and I did so, and so did I, Yes, I suppose so

Complete these sentences

He told me to leave and I

He left the room and

John bought one and Mary

John told Mary to buy one and she .

Is it true? Yes, I

Do you think he knows about it? Yes, .

It isn't true, is it? I don't

(c) *so that*

Finish this quickly so that you can start another

I did it so that I might earn some money

I am doing these exercises

Light the fire

We put out the fire

(d) *so (conjunction)*

It was late, so I went home

He told me to do it, so I did it

Change these

I went home because the door was shut

The door was shut, so I went home

I couldn't do my homework because I had no ink

I ate some fruit because he asked me to.

I could not buy one because I had no money.

We went for a long walk because there was plenty of time.

- (v) *put*: Add together suitable words from List A to words in List B, and make a sentence. For example, *This clock is wrong; I must put it right.* [a clock (B); put right (A).]

A

B

| | | | |
|---------------|-------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| put right | put forward | a clock | a building |
| put in order | put in | a proposal | a rebellion |
| put an end to | put on | a claim | a trouble |
| put away | put out | a light sleep | |
| put back | put to | the things in a shop | |
| put down | put up | the books in a cupboard | |
| | | a book on a shelf | |
| | | your clothes | |

CONCLUSION

THE AIM in this essay has been to pass on to fellow-teachers some of the devices which the writer has found, in his own experience, to be of practical value in scotching 'common errors'

The first faults are theirs that commit them,
The second are theirs that permit them

That is a hard saying, but all will agree that we cannot be satisfied with our work in English so long as common errors continue to be so common. It means considerable trouble and constant vigilance, but if we exert ourselves, we can hope for a greater measure of success as a reward. The gods sell all things at a fair price

